

THE FORTUNATE PRISONER

MAX PEMBERTON

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The Fortunate Prisoner

1863-1950

By

MAX PEMBERTON

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"The Gold Wolf," "The Giant's Gate," "Sir Richard
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ILLUSTRATIONS BY

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MAX PEMBERTON.

A Fortunate Prisoner.

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THE FORTNIGHTLY

1887

THE FORTNIGHTLY

THE FORTNIGHTLY

THE FORTNIGHTLY

THE FORTNIGHTLY

THE FORTNIGHTLY

THE FORTNIGHTLY

Mrs Gerlie Fairweather

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CHAPTER I

JOHN CANNING COMES OUT OF PRISON

THE two men left New Scotland Yard together, and coming round by way of Westminster they turned up Whitehall and walked briskly toward Charing Cross.

Of the two, a passer-by might have named that always cheerful soul, Benjamin Crabbe, as the more desirable acquaintance. His round boyish face did not speak of prison, or its servitude. He carried no burdens of self-reproach upon his memory, nor was his mind troubled by those of conscience. When a judge and a jury had agreed that Benjamin Crabbe's financial operations as practised upon the race-courses of England were worthy of penal servitude, the merry fellow received his sentence, as he now received his freedom, with a smiling face. After all, no honest man had suffered by his roguery; no woman's heart been broken. Benjamin Crabbe could look into the eyes of the world and declare upon his solemn word of honor that this was so.

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John Canning possessed no such ready claims to casual sympathy as those enjoyed by his happy companion. He looked neither to the right hand nor to the left as he walked, but kept his eyes straight before him as though they sought a goal. Thirty-nine years of life had done him much mental and some physical injury. His gait was firm, but his cheeks were hollow; and he made little of that fine figure which had been so conspicuous on the banks of the Cam nineteen long years ago. The face itself deserved a verdict more reserved. It had rarely failed to cast a spell upon both men and women in the old days—a bold, classic face with wonderfully clear blue eyes and a Norseman's hair. Here were intellect and ambition clearly marked; swift sound judgment, but pre-eminently shrewdness.

Now, these two had been released from prison upon this morning of May in the year 1907, and for a little way they set out upon the same road. John Canning walked it with long swinging strides as though hastening to a destination; Benjamin Crabbe with quick shuffling steps which seemed to resent his companion's haste. Not until they had come to the corner by Charing Cross did either call a halt, for the shadow of prison still lay upon them and darkened their path.

"I'll tell you what, Mr. Canning," said Ben

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Crabbe at last, "if we go on in this way, they'll think we're running from the 'tecs. Ain't you going to have a drink or something? I was thinking of that all last night—a glass of beer at Charing Cross and some of my pals to drink it with me. Well, they ain't here, and let 'em go. I shall get on all right without 'em, and you ain't no better off. Suppose we have a glass and forget all about it. This sun makes a man feel like it, now don't it, truly?"

John Canning came to a sudden halt and seemed to remember his companion's existence for the first time since the gate of New Scotland Yard had closed upon him.

"Don't get drinking, Benjamin," he rejoined quickly, "you'll be in trouble again if you do. Where's the man you spoke about? Where's Nance? Didn't you tell me you expected them?"

"So I did, and precious little good it done me. Wait till I see the gal and have it out with her. They're all alike, Mr. Canning; never trust a woman when your back is turned. But a gentleman like you has found that out long ago, I'll be bound. You don't believe over much in the women, now do you, Mr. Canning?"

"I will tell you to-morrow," said Canning quickly. "Meanwhile I must have a cigar, Benjamin, one of the best that London can give me.

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Do you know, it is more than five years since I smoked a cigar, and I have been looking forward to this particular cigar for hundreds of days. Let us go and buy one—with the King's money, Benjamin."

He entered a cigar shop just at the corner of Trafalgar Square, leaving Mr. Crabbe to wait for him upon the pavement outside. The fellow had amused him in prison, where they sang in the choir together, but here in Whitehall he was not amused at all. Captivity, which welcomed any friendship, even the meanest a month ago, caused liberty to turn from it to-day as from an aggravation of the penalty. John Canning said that he must be alone.

He offered his companion a cigar and lingered yet a little while to find some decent excuse for getting rid of him. To be sure, the lad was sympathetic enough and very willing to be of service. A vague idea of an honorable future floated in his mind. And why should it not be shared with this handsome, kindly gentleman who had been his master even in prison?

"I'll tell you what," said Benjamin enthusiastically, "let's go down to Newmarket together and see old Jeff Corder. He ain't particular, Jeff ain't, and wouldn't ask no questions, no, not if you'd been 'ung. I shall go down to him, and you'd better come with me. 'Osses ain't got no memory, thank

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God, and they won't think no worse of me for running across a plowed field with five pound two in my pocket, and 'arf Brighton at my heels. Come along with me, Mr. Canning, and see what old Jeff can do for us. We're on the police list for many a month, and I don't suppose people'll be anxious to see us at mothers' meetings. Why don't you think of it and come down to Newmarket?"

John Canning said that he would, though, in truth, he never wished to see Benjamin Crabbe again. He had been grateful to the fellow for many a laugh in prison, but was not grateful to him for such frank expressions here upon the pavement of Trafalgar Square. Happily, the sudden advent of the girl Nance, dressed in the brightest of blue and as radiant in her reception of "Benny," relieved him of an embarrassing ordeal; and with a brief word to them both he terminated the interview.

"If ever you are in trouble write to me," he said. "A letter addressed care of my lawyer, Abraham Wesson, in Old Broad Street, will find me always. Don't hesitate to write, Ben. And let me wish you and this young lady the best of luck."

The girl said, "Thank you kindly, sir;" Benjamin merely exclaimed, "I'll not forget, Mr. Canning," and walked away immediately with his companion in the direction of Pall Mall.

Interest, claiming them, severed the bonds of a

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mutual obligation in an instant and sent them upon their divergent ways without a thought of the darker days. As for John Canning, the merry faces reproached him; the vulgar expressions disgusted him. For more than four years, passing from prison to prison, he had craved for some human voice to comfort him, some kindly hand to lift him up. To-day, the day of his release, he shunned all voices and would be alone.

London, the city of his fortunes, affrighted him. What a thunder of sounds! What a kaleidoscope of men and things! And how the city had changed even during the years of his imprisonment. The motor buses seemed very Juggernauts crashing a way through a human jungle. The press of the people and the traffic had increased beyond all knowledge since last he made a part of it. And the fashions in the shops, the dress, the taxicabs, the very names of newspapers of whose existence he had never heard, all these helped the illusion that he had been thrust suddenly into a new city and stood there a stranger and alone.

Solitude is the fit harbor for shame, and John Canning did not regret the circumstance. He had planned his future while he was in prison; but, oddly enough, had made no allowance for this sense of isolation. People would judge him generously, he had thought. A man who floats a public com-

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pany and gets into difficulties with the law over it is not in the category of the common criminal. Men remember that he was shrewd and far-seeing. Perhaps their human dislike of supreme success makes them grateful to such a man for his fall. John Canning thought that he would find many a friend ready to receive him with open arms upon the day of his release. But when he left New Scotland Yard, from which all prisoners are finally discharged, not a soul was there to meet him, no message awaited him, not a single hand had been outstretched.

The first instants of freedom, supreme in their emotions, permitted him to ignore both the omission and its significance. He had listened to the chatter of an uneducated companion and forgotten for the instant that other voices should have addressed him. Now that he was alone and the traffic roared about him, the truth smote him a sudden blow before which he reeled. Good God! he said, that all should have deserted him; the friends of his youth and of his manhood, those whose fortunes he had made, whose aims he had helped, whose homes he had founded. His father was a very old man and might know nothing of this day, but Sybil, whose heroism during his trial had been the wonder of the town, whose devotion he would have wagered his very life upon, that she should have sent no

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message seemed beyond all belief. And yet he could not doubt it; the streets mocked him as he walked. For the first time since they accused him he knew the meaning of shame.

He was ashamed to be abroad, he who had longed for liberty as a child for the woods. The crime that he had committed now stood out, not as a sin against the law, but against men. That pride in his own success, which had supported him during his trial and sentence and afterward in prison, deserted him in an instant when he knew the truth. The world would not receive him. He was despised and rejected of men. It must be so, no subterfuge could put the thought away.

He, John Canning, walked on swiftly, no longer remembering his freedom. His steps were those of a fugitive. He would have shrunk from the touch of a human hand as from a blow.

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CHAPTER II

ABRAHAM WESSON RECEIVES HIS CLIENT

ABRAHAM WESSON, the lawyer, occupied a suite of rooms upon the first floor of one of the largest houses in Old Broad Street. He surveyed humanity from a seat in the window, whence he could espy the great human stream below and look almost into the faces of those upon the roofs of the motor omnibuses.

Abraham Wesson had lived for sixty-two years, and had spent a good forty of them lamenting the Corn Laws and the English gold which had gone to their repeal. This was a favorite topic when he was not discussing his wife's genius for the theatre. Sarah Siddons was no such tragedienne he would tell you. And her son took after her, and could be Lord Chancellor if he would.

He was a good-hearted man and did not lack sympathy. The "fees" which went to and fro on the pavement below interested him chiefly because of their stupendous ignorance. Why were they not tilling the soil to grow the wheat which America sent to us? In a professionally suicidal aspect he

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discouraged litigation and would have none of it. The City liked Abraham Wesson because of this, and told you that he was an honest man.

Forty years ago this ferret-faced little lawyer with the Dundreary whiskers had been a pupil on the farm of old John Canning, who tilled the fertile soil of Suffolk in the parish of Honiton. The farmer had a portrait of Sir Robert in his parlor, and was wont to vent his spleen upon it at intervals. The young man learned the truths of an ancient controversy from such violent lips and carried them to a lawyer's office in London. His abiding joy was still a holiday on the Suffolk heaths. He had loved young John Canning for his father's sake and suffered a cruel blow to his pride when the crash came.

"He might have been anything," he would say dramatically; "there was nothing beyond his reach. Gladstone himself hadn't a better head for figures. And he throws it all away on a steamship company which was bringing foreign wheat to England. Show me anything like that and I'll believe you," a vague aphorism, by the way, which Abraham Wesson employed upon many occasions.

The morning of May 21, in the year 1907, found the old lawyer in a state of very natural excitement. He had visited young Canning twice while he was at Portland, and would have gone to New Scot-

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land Yard to meet him but for a sudden call to a consultation which was not to be ignored. Perhaps he wished to spare his client some embarrassment, certainly he gave directions to that end when he returned to his office at half-past eleven and summoned his head clerk, Muller, to his private room.

"I shall want all the papers in the Michael Canning matter," he said; "Mr. John will be here almost immediately and will wish to know everything. Please keep the clerks out of the way as much as possible. They will know how to behave. He is a very sensitive man, we must not forget, and one of our best clients."

The clerk agreed and declared that he would do his best. When John Canning arrived a quarter of an hour later he discovered none but a chubby-faced office boy to meet him, and was ushered at once into the old lawyer's private room. Very methodically Abraham Wesson pulled a chair to the table and dusted it. His voice was a little husky. He shook hands with his client as with any professional acquaintance who had dropped in to consult him.

"Up to time," he said, with the merest attempt at merriment. "I should have been there, but I had to consult Kramer. Wonderful man Kramer!

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The judges are afraid of him. Won't you sit down? We shall be quite alone here."

John Canning lifted his eyes at this, but immediately lowered them. Why should he be glad that he was alone with his father's oldest friend? Was not this the truth again? Men were ashamed to be seen with him.

"Of course I came to you first," he said.

"Of course you did. Where else should you go? I'd have asked you down home to-night, but my daughter-in-law is there. Inquisitive woman as ever lived, but you'll be better in some private hotel for a day or two, and there's much to settle in London."

John Canning did not answer. He leaned upon the table and faced the lawyer with that hard glance he had last employed at the Board meeting which declared his failure and his ruin.

"When did my uncle Michael die?"

"Two days before Christmas. I told you so in my letter to the pri—to—to Portland. He was a big, strong man and ought to have lived longer. I remember him well at Honiton. He served bailiff to Lord Sommerton and went to Australia sooner than marry the huntsman's daughter. An obstinate man—believed in Cobden. Your father wouldn't sit at the same table with him at the last."

"I have heard him say so. What was his fortune worth?"

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"We don't know yet. My agent at Sydney has the matter in hand. But you'll never want for bread nor butter either. Put it down at a quarter of a million, and it's not beyond the mark."

"Shall I have possession soon?"

"You'll get it as soon as I do. If you want any money meanwhile, my bank's at your service. Anything up to a thousand is lying there for you."

Canning reflected upon it an instant, and then replied—

"I should like five hundred pounds in notes and gold—now, if I can have them."

The lawyer touched a bell and summoned Muller to the room. Obedient to his instructions, the head clerk remained somewhat in the background and spoke in a whisper. When the check had been drawn and dispatched to the bank they began to speak of other things.

"You are going down to Suffolk—to your father, I suppose?"

"Possibly, yes. I have no plans. Does my father know that Michael left me this fortune?"

"I told him so by letter. But he is a very old man, and very old men are not much interested in money. Perhaps you'll be glad to think that his faculties are not quite what they were. He and I have been as brothers, so you mustn't mind my saying it, John."

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"I quite understand it. Let me ask you another question, one that did not occur to me while I was in prison. It concerns myself. What do men think of me, Wesson? What kind of a reception am I likely to meet with at the hands of my old friends?"

The lawyer locked his fingers together and leaned far back in his leather chair. He was pleased that the question should have been asked. Better the truth than the affront. And he knew that John Canning must meet with many an affront.

"The City thought you unlucky. When a young man takes to company promoting, he launches his ship on a rocky shore. Your balance sheets were fraudulent according to the law, but they were smart according to the practice. I heard you blamed in many quarters and praised in a few. The world is rather kind to cleverness which fails. If you press me to tell you—and who should tell you if not your lawyer?—then I say that you must not expect too much in the days just before you. Prison is the one thing society neither forgives nor forgets. It will accept a debauchee, a drunkard, a blasphemer and a rogue, but it won't accept a man who has been in prison, even if his crime were no greater than assaulting a railway porter. If you were poor, I should be very sorry for you to-day, but you are rich, and will find many to fawn upon you for money's sake. Beware of them, John. Don't for-

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get that a man may rise on stepping stones, as Tennyson told us. You may yet go far if you bide your time. But you'll have to live abroad to do it, and live abroad you will if you are a sensible man. What's England to you or any man who has fallen foul of the laws of England? You'll never rise here. And you have brains which may make you a leader in another country. That's as certain as the pen before me. You have no future in England, but you might have a great future abroad."

He spoke with that smug self-assurance which characterizes the family solicitor, but not unkindly. John Canning heard him with ears agog and a quickened pulse. Must this, indeed, be the verdict; this edict of banishment; this abnegation of self; this final and immediate admission that there was no future for him in his own country? He had never thought of it in prison. Vanity did not cease to tell him there that the world praised his cleverness and would judge him kindly.

"You think, then," he exclaimed presently, "that decent people will cut me and the others tolerate me because of my fortune? Is it that, Wesson?"

"It is human nature. Men choose their acquaintances nowadays as they choose their pictures. They want something to decorate their rooms; something which is talked about. Your friends will be those who have something to gain by your friendship. I

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say so, and I have lived more than sixty years. The English are the hardest nation in the world to the unfortunate. Expect nothing from those you knew five years ago, and you will not be disappointed."

He had meant to tell John Canning this while he was in prison; but his courage failed him there. A shrewd old man, he foresaw the difficulties, the humiliations, the affronts which would attend any attempt upon his client's part to re-enter the society from which failure had driven him. And he harped upon the point, the more because of the other's silence.

"You are a rich man and the whole world is before you. Are there no better places than Threadneedle Street? Think what you might do with your money—a yacht, a château in France, a home in Italy; shooting, big-game hunting in Africa, a tour round the world. And then you'll settle down and find some pretty girl, and build a home of your own and have children. Is that not better than Threadneedle Street and the stockbrokers? A thousand times, I say. Come to my house when my daughter-in-law is gone, and we'll drink a glass of port over it. And you shall hear my wife. A wonderful woman, John; there isn't such an actress on the English stage."

In another and lighter mood John Canning might have hinted that the Tragic Muse was not the one

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he would cultivate under such circumstances; but he knew the old lawyer's weakness and held his tongue. The words had touched him strangely. A home, a wife, children! What had Sybil to say to that? A hot flush of blood rushed to his face at this memory. He felt that he must terminate the interview immediately, but he had no courage to ask news of Sybil.

"I shall come, of course," he said; "but that will be after I have made my plans. You are very right about the hotel. I shall stop at Berners' in Bond Street to-night, and afterward, perhaps, at the Savoy. Address all my letters to Berners' for the moment. If I want money, I shall come to you."

Wesson retorted with a commonplace. He was surprised at himself for expressing so little of that sympathy he felt for his old friend's son; but young John Canning was not a man who invited such utterances, although he prompted them. And he would understand the difficulty. With which consolation the old man shook his client heartily by the hand and bade him God-speed.

"You can go out by the side door, if you like," he said confidentially; "there'll be no one on the stairs and clerks have tongues."

John Canning thanked him, but declined the courtesy. Walking with head erect he passed through the outer office, and met unflinchingly the

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gaze of half a dozen shabby young men, who had just been telling each other that Canning "the convict" was with the governor.

These certainly would have made a hero of him. Perhaps they were astonished that his portrait was not already in Madame Tussaud's.

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CHAPTER III

A RETROSPECT AND AFTERWARD

THERE is music in the voice of a great city for him who has the gift of her harmonies. John Canning was proud to account himself one of these in the old days.

How he had loved London. What an arena for men's ambitions. What a mighty temple of effort and achievement. All that pride might desire and success might win were to be had in London. This he had kept before him during the years; this was the truth he carried to London fifteen years ago when a lad from Cambridge, he had entered a shipbroker's office and sworn to establish his fortunes.

And he had established them. That restless, omniverous brain made him a marked man from the first. Old Stephen Bond, the shipbroker, was not one to admit a young man's cleverness except upon compulsion, but he recognized at an early moment the ability of this youth whom he had received into his office upon his son's recommendation.

John Canning, in truth, had been a lucky fellow

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from the beginning. It was luck which sent Dr. Hooper of King's College at Cambridge down to hear the Sunday service in Honiton parish church, and there to remark the beauty of the lad's voice; luck which admitted young John to the college choir; luck which permitted him afterward to win a mathematical scholarship in a poor year; luck which named young Henry Bond for his friend at King's, and so obtained him a place in Stephen Bond's office.

He was such a good-tempered, masterful, charming acquaintance. Every one admitted it. Those who disliked him were the few who had suffered at Cambridge and in London by his successes. He had no real enemy, perhaps. And he certainly believed that he had many friends.

The aftermath is the story of the tragedy. John Canning succeeded so well in old Stephen Bond's office that he set up presently for himself; pushed ahead as a financier with almost incredible success; took to promoting shipping companies—was caught in the great panic of the year 1901, accused of falsifying a balance sheet and sentenced at the Old Bailey to seven years' penal servitude.

The trial had been a nine days' wonder, and as quickly forgotten. Many said that this would be the end of the new gospel of youth, so loudly preached just then in commercial circles. John

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Canning had not failed because he was dishonest, but by reason of his faith in himself. When things went ill, he had been proud enough to say, "I can put them straight." A lofty contempt for old-fashioned restraint and prudence ruined him. He had believed to the last in the stability of the Mediterranean and Morocco ports company, and was astounded when the cataclysm overwhelmed it. Impossible that such a thing could have happened to him!

London had spoken to him with a dreadful voice upon that day of his arrest, and the sounds often rang in his ears during the long years of his imprisonment. He had dined at the Savoy Hotel, he remembered, and taken Sybil and her brother to the theatre afterward. A merry supper party kept them up very late, and it had been after one when he returned to his rooms in the Albany—then still a famous home of bachelors. Waking late upon the following morning, his valet Gilford informed him that two police officers were in the house. He would never forget the instant humiliation, the sudden realization of woe and disaster in its ultimate shape. In truth he had hardly listened to the charge, so loudly did the word "ruin" ring in his ears.

And they had sent him to penal servitude. Perhaps the truth was that the mere incidents of im-

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prisonment counted very little in his case. Old Stephen Bond had done his best for him; young Henry had been a staunch friend—he had heard constantly from Sybil during his trial, been cheered by frequent messages and letters. When the end came, her brother Henry said that they feared for her reason—and he added boyishly, “Of course she is frightfully cut up.”

How many years had passed since those words were uttered. Where was Stephen Bond? Was he alive or dead? And Sybil, that stately gracious girl whom he had worshiped while yet a mere lad at Cambridge, and made the idol of his manhood, what of her? He had been a coward not to put the question to old Abraham Wesson. The agony he had suffered in the prison had been the agony of her silence. Had she cast him off utterly? Was there no hope that the years might redeem the past? He had learned to abandon the dream. None but a fool, he said, would cling tenaciously to such a folly.

This was the loudest voice of London as she spoke to him upon the day of his freedom. He must learn the truth about Sybil, and learn it as quickly as might be. There was no plan in his mind when he left Abraham Wesson’s office; but he had money in his pocket, and in a sense all the world was before him. What his position would

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have been had he emerged from prison a beggar and friendless, he did not dare to think. But God's providence had spared him this, and he reflected with almost savage irony that he was a richer man by far than many of those who would scorn him.

This pleasant thought warred with others less pleasant as he walked up Broad Street and made his way toward the west. It was a glorious morning of May, and even the City breathed a sweet air. These had been the scenes of his triumph in the old days. He paused at the corner of Threadneedle Street and looked up at the windows of the office where he had dealt in thousands as others deal in tens. With what a fever of anxiety had he entered that building upon the mornings of these tempestuous days. How many had done him homage in that brief season of his prosperity. Would they remember him to-day, might it not be that his very name had been forgotten?

He crossed the street and sauntered by the door of the Stock Exchange. Many unfamiliar faces passed by, but one at length which was familiar. John Canning recognized in the man the boy Val Percival, who had been at Cambridge with him. He stopped and touched him on the shoulder.

"Surely it is Percival!"

"Good God—Canning!"

It was not said unkindly. The manner, the tone

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of it marked both astonishment and sympathy—but also some embarrassment. Nevertheless, this well-dressed, busy fellow glanced about him as though ashamed to be seen in such company. He was quite unable to talk rationally. John Canning himself flushed crimson. He understood the situation without a word spoken.

“I thought you would not remember me. Things are very different, Percival.”

“Yes, yes, I’m very sorry—is there anything I can do, Canning?”

“I suppose you have all pronounced sentence on me long ago, but you can tell me something. Is old Stephen Bond still alive?”

“He died three years ago.”

“And his daughter? You knew her well, I remember.”

Percival looked askance as he answered the question.

“She’s living at the old house in Charles Street. Harry has gone to Africa. Didn’t you know?”

“I know nothing,” said Canning quietly. “How should I after five years in Portland.”

The “friend” shrank from the brutality of the confession, and, afraid to say more, he made some excuse and went into the House. But John Canning set out immediately to walk to Charles Street, where the whole truth should be told to him.

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CHAPTER IV

THE LITTLE HOUSE IN CHARLES STREET

OLD Stephen Bond had spent forty years of his life at the little house in Charles Street, Berkeley Square; and prosperity did not move him to a more ambitious home. True, he had a great country seat near Tring, and posed occasionally at the week-end as a country gentleman; but the best of his days were spent in Charles Street, and there he died.

John Canning knew every room in this little house, and his dreams had repeopled it many a night when he lay in prison and sleep was denied to him. Imagination made much of it; but, in truth, it was no more than a substantial building of red brick with a narrow front upon a narrow roadway and a square hall opening up behind double doors. These latter used to be thrown wide open when Sybil, radiant in a Paris gown, swept down to the brougham which should carry her to Covent Garden or the theatres. John Canning, a prisoner, would recall such a scene before others reminiscent of the house. How majestic had been her presence! With what pride had he accompanied her!

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And now he stood in Charles Street once again, upon an afternoon of May, when the sun shone gloriously, and even Berkeley Square had its gift of fresh green leaves. About him was the typical life of a London season—carriages rolling lazily toward the Park; well-dressed women going to and from the open houses; motors humming by; busy people passing at a brisk walk as though the routine of gaiety dictated hasty steps. He had visited Charles Street a hundred times under such circumstances; but never with such a sense of doubt and hesitation. How if Sybil had heard that this was the day of his freedom and were awaiting him? True, no letter had come to the prison; but prudence would forbid such a message. John Canning stood at the corner of Berkeley Square, afraid to stir a step. He had trusted Sybil before them all, and his faith endured.

A cheeky butcher-boy, romping with another upon the pavement, asked him what time it was, and he pulled out the great gold watch Stephen Bond gave him many years ago, and answered, "Four o'clock." He had forgotten no detail of Sybil's daily life, and this he remembered would be the hour at which she set off for her daily drive. The thought took him quickly from the square; and he approached the house of his desires and gazed wistfully at its doors. These were both closed and the sun-blinds drawn

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over the windows—but the house was quite unchanged. The very flower boxes were full of the pink tulips she loved.

A little house of red brick, closed and silent and sleeping in the sunshine! How often in the old days had he not hastened there, upon just such an afternoon as this, or driven up in his phaeton to take Sybil to the Park and afterward to dinner at Ranelagh. Their engagement had never been quite to old Bond's satisfaction, for the shipbroker had conservative notions and disbelieved in all who did not hasten slowly; but Harry, his son, had been staunch to Canning since their Cambridge days, and would hear of no other husband for his sister. The two were much together at that time, and their plans rarely excluded Sybil, who loved all games, and had even stooped, in a frivolous mood, to play cricket with them.

She was very young then, three years Canning's junior; but she remained the girl in his imagination, and he could not believe that the years had counted in her case. No man recalls the face of a woman he has loved in any other shape than that which youth has moulded for him; and John Canning made no exception. He depicted Sybil as the school-girl, with mischievous hair about her pretty face, and blue eyes full of laughter. A thought of the aftermath of womanhood remained distasteful to him.

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She would drive to the Park presently, he said, and would discover him as he stood and waited for her. A dread of missing his opportunity kept him very close to the house—so close that his presence was remarked by a lazy butler standing at a neighboring door. This man laughed a little impudently, and would have spoken had he been encouraged. But Canning passed him thrice with a stony stare, and he went in presently and stood at the window of the house, the better to spy upon this stranger.

There was shame in the consciousness of this, and it brought hot blood to Canning's cheeks. Why did he hesitate to knock at Sybil's door? What cowardice kept the truth back from him? He had but to say, "I am John Canning, and I have come to you according to the promise." If she did not wish him to remain, a word would intimate as much, and he would go. Oh, be sure something of the old pride remained and was this man's finest inheritance. Broken but not bent, he would yet face the world triumphantly. If he temporized for the moment, five years of prison answered for his weakness. He would have gone to any other; but not to Sybil, who held the supreme gift to bestow or withhold it as her heart dictated.

The thought and the espionage had carried him a little way from the house, and when he turned again a motor-car stood at the door—a covered carriage,

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with a driver and footman in livery. This had hardly drawn up when the doors of the house were thrown wide open and Sybil herself appeared, and was at once driven away toward Berkeley Square. To John Canning the accident of her route seemed almost an omen. She had not even glanced in his direction. He was quite sure that she had not seen him. He said it was the old Sybil, however, and that time had dealt generously with her.

The same grace of carriage, the same proud dignity which had characterized the earlier years were to be observed in the woman's swift movements and her attitude toward the servants. Her dress was quiet, and in that excellent taste she had always displayed. A brief scrutiny might have declared her to be without cares, one who went to her daily pleasures with no thought either of yesterday or tomorrow. John Canning, however, refused to believe it. A pathetic hope still moved him, as no emotion he could remember even in the terrible days. She must know. She could not have forgotten!

He left the street at last, wondering that it was so difficult to go; but he was back again at half-past six, and at a quarter to seven precisely Sybil returned to her house. This time, determining not to leave the issue in doubt, he approached the carriage boldly and lifted his hat as she stepped out.

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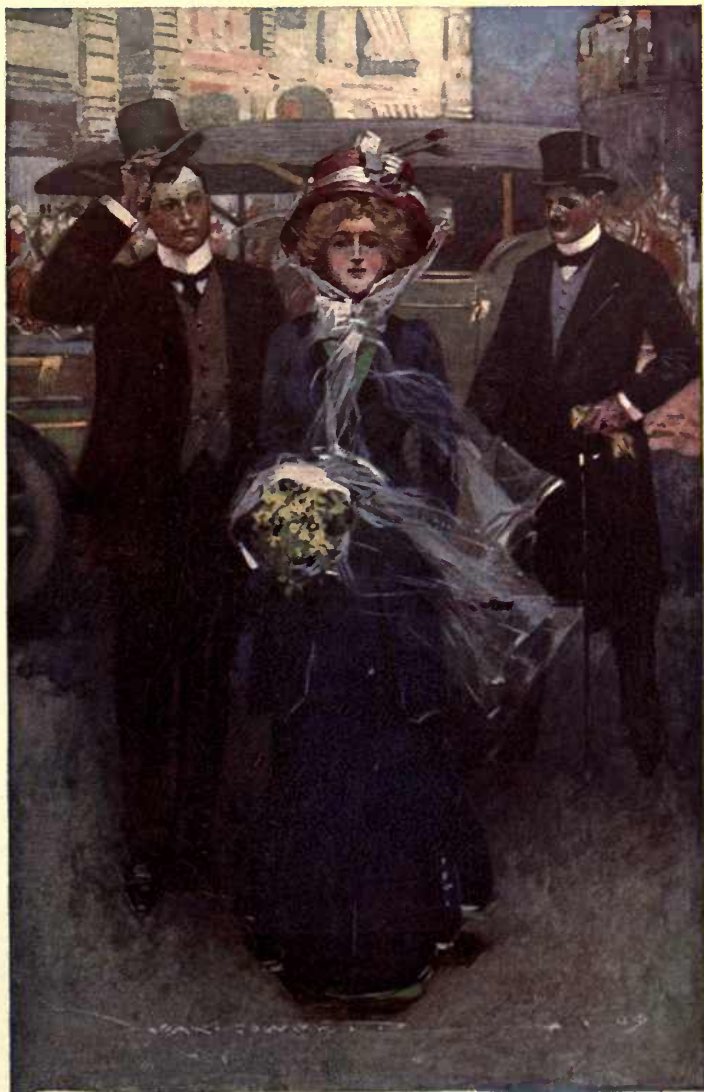
Her response was a grave inclination of the head, and a swift passage to her own door. The man who followed her, a tall, handsome young fellow, stared at Canning a little curiously, and then, after a moment's hesitation, he asked somewhat awkwardly—

“What do you want; what is it?”

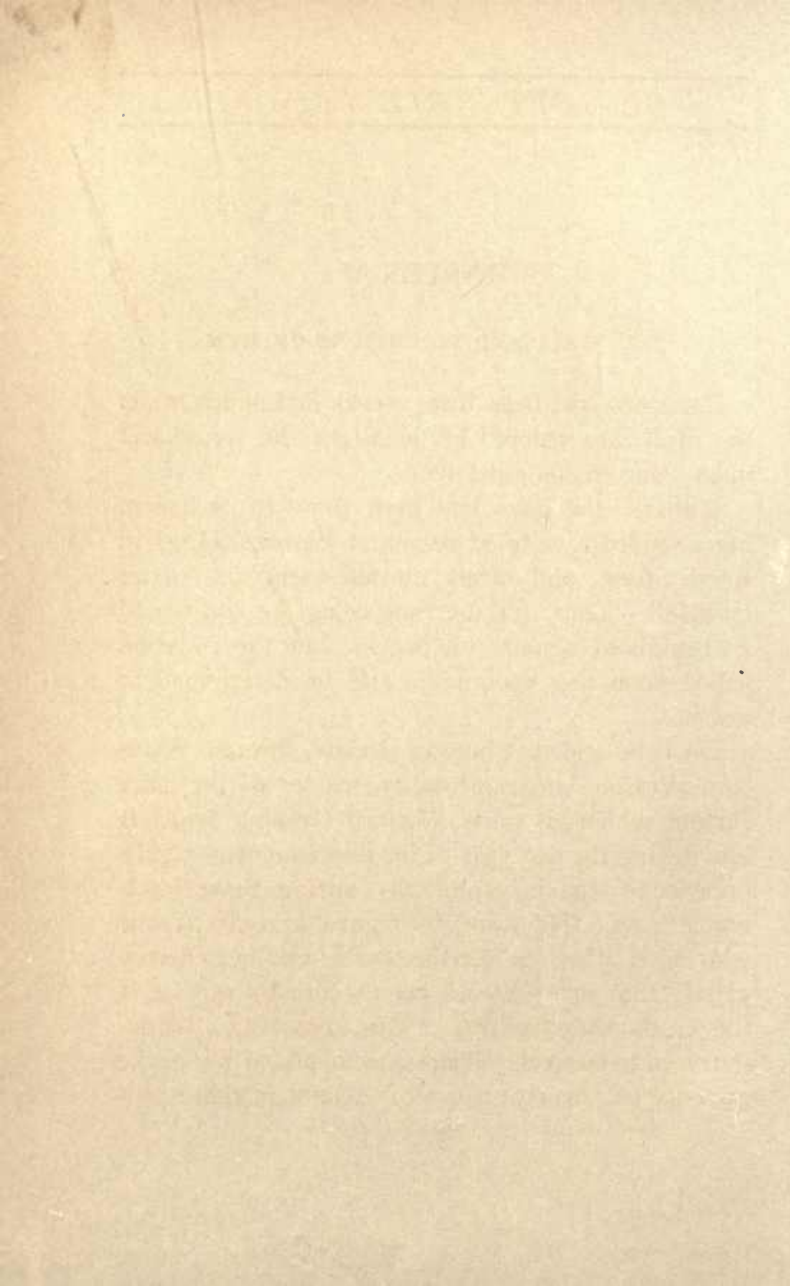
“I wish to speak to Miss Bond.”

“Miss—Miss—but that lady is my wife. Why do you wish to speak to her?”

John Canning could not answer a single word. He turned swiftly on his heel and left the street.



HER RESPONSE WAS A GRAVE INCLINATION OF THE
HEAD AND A SWIFT PASSAGE TO HER OWN DOOR



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CHAPTER V

ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN

CANNING had been three weeks in London when the droll idea entered his head that he would call upon some of his old friends.

Hitherto the days had been those of seclusion. He occupied a suite of rooms at Berners' Hotel in Bond Street, and rarely quitted them until after nightfall. Thus, for the time being, he had found a stronghold against the world; but the isolation palled upon him eventually, and he determined to end it.

Let it be said that he was already, through Abraham Wesson's instrumentality, master of the large fortune which his uncle, Michael Canning, had left him during the last year of his imprisonment. Such knowledge was his stout ally during those intolerable days. He came to regard himself as one who stood alone against the world; and he reflected grimly that many would yet do him lip service if the truth were known. This, however, he determined to conceal. There was an added joy in the pretence of poverty; a cynical delight in those pro-

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fessions of need with which he determined to assail his friends.

And first, a visit to that good-tempered old gentleman, the Vicar of St. Colomb's in Piccadilly. Canning had known him very well in the golden days, and subscribed hundreds to his charities. The vicar's comfortable sermons were justly esteemed by his large congregations. Society said that he was an excellent diner-out, but not so gallant as a diner-in. He preached at Westminster Abbey twice a year, and invariably upon some aspect of our common charity. To him, then, went John Canning during the third week of his freedom.

He saw the vicar in the little study which overlooks the Green Park. Prone to stoutness, somewhat uncertain upon his legs, but marvelously benevolent in countenance, the Reverend John Wallshot received his old friend both stealthily and with caution. When he shut his study door it was with the air of one who would not have the servants overhear a word of the conversation. He motioned Canning to a seat as others bid a prisoner take a chair in the dock. His words were low-toned and full of awe—he was obviously afraid that this man was going to ask for something.

"My dear friend," he said, "I have thought of you very often. And now I see you. Well, well, life is full of contrasts, and no one can be more

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sensible of them than the vicar of a populous parish. Do you remain in England, may I ask? Is it your intention to stay with us?"

Canning answered in plain words.

"That depends upon my friends—I wish to see what they are going to do for me."

"My dear sir, the world is not very kind to those who have met with such—er—um—misfortunes as you—that is—which we mutually understand. I should have thought you would have done wiser to go abroad."

"Then perhaps you can help me to get there, vicar?"

"Would that I could. The claims which this parish makes upon me are unending. And the Ecclesiastical Commissioners are most unsympathetic. Can you believe it, I am at this moment positively compelled to do the work of this great district with three curates. I ask you, is that reasonable—is it possible? We have a bishop who is never at rest. I can see that he wishes the clergy to imitate him."

"Then you can do nothing for me?"

The vicar flushed, but did not relent.

"There is," he said, turning away his head as he spoke, "a society, I believe, which gives aid to discharged—er—to unfortunate people in your position. I could write to them on your behalf."

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"Is it a good society, vicar?"

"One of the best, I am told."

"Then tell them I will contribute five hundred pounds to their funds. I was going to give the money to you—but I see that it will be more use to them. Please send the money in my name. I am sure you will approve of such a form of charity—especially as you are unable to do anything for discharged prisoners yourself."

The vicar of St. Colomb's opened his eyes wider than he had opened them for many a day. What he really thought of himself no man will ever know; but he was clever enough to realize his mistake and to cover it adroitly.

"Most generous of you—most generous," he rejoined, "so like the John Canning who used to be my right hand. I will send the money, of course. There can be no finer type of charity than that which ministers to the fallen. You feel for them—it is very natural—as we, your friends, have felt for you."

Canning smiled, but would not take up the challenge.

"There is just one question I should like to ask before I go," he said; "you married Sybil Bond, I believe. How long ago was that?"

"To the best of my memory nearly three years.

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She married Captain Endsleigh of the Blues—but, of course, you knew—and—ah, I remember.”

“With a better memory than a woman’s. I am obliged to you. If I remain in England, you may hear of me again. But I am coming to your opinion. This country is no place for a man who has committed a crime and been punished for it. He owes it to society to die. He owes it to his friends never to remind them that he was—and is. You agree with me, vicar—your words say that you do.”

The old clergyman shook his head. What a mistake he had made. And what a fine thing it would have been to have posed before his congregation as the staunch friend of one who could write a check for five hundred pounds for any object which pleased him!

“We have too little charity!” he exclaimed, uttering his favorite platitude. “The world is losing its old faiths, and chivalry is going with them. But I doubt not that a rich man would find friends whatever his past. We do not ask to-day what a man has done, but what he is going to do. That is the plain truth, Mr. Canning, however much I, a clergyman, may regret it.”

He said much more in a similar vein, threw out many a hint which might undo this colossal error of sending five hundred pounds to a fund which

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neither he nor his church wardens administered; but Canning was already tired of him, and with a dry word of thanks he continued his mission, and was shortly closeted with his old friend, Sir Horace Gipps, the banker. This old man was honest to the core. He shook hands with his visitor, but obviously did not wish him to stay.

"Well, Canning," he said, "glad to see you about again. How long have you been in London?"

"Three weeks—I was released from Portland just three weeks ago."

"And what business had any one with your brains to be in Portland at all? You know as well as I do that the man who climbs quickly in the City has a long way to fall when the ladder's rotten. You should have listened to the old men. I told you so at the time. I tell you so again to-day."

"Wise advice, Sir Horace—if I were returning to the City. But I am not. You have no place here for unlucky men. It is true that half of you are much greater rogues than I ever was—but the others are not found out. I shall go to the East. It has no memory."

"Don't believe it. You will meet some curious Englishman every mile and he'll want to know all about you before he pitches his tent in your camp. The East's no place for your brains. Why not try America? They'd call you smart out there."

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"Will you head a subscription to get me out?"

"I'll give you just five pounds. That's what I give to every man who wants to make a new start. Five pounds—I came to London with that much five-and-forty years ago. Why should any man want more?"

Canning laughed.

"I came here," he said, "not to beg, but to open an account with your bank and leave some ten thousand with you. But I'll take your five pounds all the same and frame it. You're the first who offered me a shilling."

Sir Horace looked a little crestfallen. The power of money is as sure with the rich as the poor. What a fool he had been not to ask questions first.

"Well," he stammered, "money will take you anywhere. Put this story round and you may fill the banqueting hall at the Cecil. I should have guessed you were not the man to come begging."

"A thing few guess. Oblige me by treating the whole affair as a professional confidence. I am going about trying to find a friend. Perhaps I shall yet succeed."

Sir Horace frankly confessed his doubts.

"Selfishness is the loudest note in the music of our time," he said; "we preach it all day and every day. Get on, push others aside, make a pile to astonish the universe, give entertainments which

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will be your glory, subscribe to charities which will emblazon your name in gold—there you have it—that is the teaching of the twentieth century. But it isn't making men, Canning, and it's working a mischief even among the old ones. Take my advice and keep out of it all. Build up a man's future. You could do it with your money, and your past will help you."

Canning said that he would think of it. They talked a little while of the business, of the account, and of things in the City, and when they parted the younger man remembered that he had an appointment to lunch at one o'clock with a good fellow named Ernest Hobby, with whom he used to play golf at Richmond. Hobby was an architect, who had a little house at Wimbledon, and lived an uneventful life there. Canning could not understand why he had written to him—but he thought it might possibly be that he had some news of Michael Canning's money.

"He will want to borrow fifty pounds," he said, as he retraced his steps from Lombard Street to the Strand; "well, I had many a good game with him, and after all he is not ashamed to come and lunch with me. I'll lend him the money."

He was to meet his friend at the Gaiety Restaurant, and here he found him at a quarter-past one. Hobby had grown a little older, but was otherwise

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unchanged—an open-minded, simple-hearted Englishman of forty, who would just as soon have thought of jumping off London Bridge as of saying the thing which was not. Possibly a more truthful person never existed. He had no tact in the ordinary sense of the term. If he thought a thing, he said it, and never troubled himself about the apology. On this occasion his dress was almost shabby. He wore a suit of indifferent tweeds, and a bowler hat which had seen better days.

"It's awfully good of you to come," he said to Canning. "I thought it would be too much to expect so soon."

"Why so soon, Hobby?"

"Oh, because all your friends will have been dining and lunching you every day. I didn't expect to get a chance just yet."

"My dear fellow, you don't understand. I have been in prison. Men don't dine and lunch prisoners. They cross the road to avoid them. That's my experience, I assure you."

Hobby opened his eyes wide.

"You don't mean to say that; but not the people who were your friends."

"Every one of them. You are the first man who has asked me to sit at the same table with him. The rest advise me to go abroad—but we won't talk about it. We'll eat instead. Good food is much to

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a man who has been in penal servitude—very much, Hobby, I can assure you.”

Hobby uttered a blunt word of protest. He disliked to hear his friend talk in this way. He had such simple notions of right and wrong himself that a shabby idea hardly entered his little world of thought.

“I couldn’t have believed it,” he said. “Why, half the City does what you did, and they know it. You’re lunching with me, Canning—don’t forget that I asked you, and it’s my turn.”

Canning surrendered the bill of fare to him and glanced round the restaurant. He was obviously a stranger to the majority there, but one group in the corner recognized him and were sharing the knowledge with the waiter. This worthy carried the news to other tables, so that half the people in the place knew that Canning, the convict, was lunching in the restaurant; and many a jest they made of it. Happily, the good Hobby knew nothing of this. He was trying to tell Canning how very sorry he was when he heard of Sybil Bond’s marriage.

“It cut me up dreadfully,” he said; “we say that we don’t believe in women while we believe in them all the time. She was such a brick during your trial—I was in court every day, and I know what happened. And then to go and marry a fellow who had been carrying on with half the women in Lon-

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don before he knew her. I was very sorry about it, Canning."

The gaucherie was lamentable, but the good fellow meant well enough, and Canning had never been the one to resent sympathy, however clumsily expressed. Still, he felt unable to speak of Sybil. He had lived nights of agony, days of shame, since he discovered the truth; but others must never discover it wholly or share a confidence of his distress.

"We won't talk of that," he said lightly; "perhaps it was too much to expect. Doesn't some writing fellow say something about the fox, hyena, crocodile, and all beasts of craft being distilled to make one woman? The old Jesuits were right after all when they recommended celibacy. They must laugh in their sleeves at the rest of us. Will you very kindly not speak of this again, Hobby? You will oblige me by doing so?"

The eyes of the two men met, and the jest carried its own negation. As for Hobby, he felt very foolish in having mentioned such a subject at all, and began to speak of himself, a thing he rarely did.

"Of course I won't," he said quickly, "and I quite understand what you mean. There's something else, however, I must speak about, and it's a commission I have—what do you think?—to build a church in Devon. I shall like that, for I can do good work over it. The man I'm speaking of has

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been living on Bell Island, out in the Bristol Channel—but he's leaving the place and setting up in an old Tudor mansion not far from Bideford. He wants to have a church in his own grounds and his own parson—and I'm to draw the plans."

"I congratulate you. You always liked this kind of thing, didn't you? I remember that churches and Wagner were your staple industries when first I knew you, Hobby."

Hobby admitted it with a smile.

"Yes," he said, "good music carries me into another world—though it's little enough I hear of it."

"And bad music is similarly moving, though the destination is not the same. What kind of a church are you to build?"

"I am to have a free hand. I think I shall choose 'late perpendicular.' It's the one style our builders seem successful in nowadays. Mr. Freeman, who used to rent the island, has given me a cottage, and I am to stay near Bideford all the summer. Why don't you come down with me, Canning—come as my guest, and stop three months? We can golf at Westward Ho when I'm not drawing, and you can sail over to Bell Island and have some fishing. If I were a rich man, I would buy that place; but you shall see it for yourself if you come, as I hope you will."

Canning put down his knife and fork and leaned

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back in his chair. He was greatly moved. Here was a man who offered him a home. The words could mean nothing less—a home and friendship and rest, offered to the outcast, from whom others turned as from a leper. He was not a weak man, but the tears sprang to his eyes and he could not utter a word.

“You see,” Hobby went on, “the commission is a good one, and will pay me very well. I shall take the wife and the boy down and we’ll have a jolly time. I am sure you would enjoy it, and if you want solitude you will get it over at Bell Island, where even the gulls suffer from the dumps. Why not say yes, at once—I am writing to Mr. Freeman to-day, and I could say that I wish to bring a friend with me.”

Canning pushed his plate away and looked his friend fully in the face.

“When do you go?” he asked.

“In about ten days’ time.”

“Then I will come—you are very kind to me, Hobby, and I will come. The date just suits me—I wish to see my father in Suffolk and to say good-bye to him. Yes, it is very kind of you.”

He could talk of nothing else. They finished their meal still discussing the prospect, and were busy upon it while coffee was served.

They would go to Devonshire together, and fish

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and shoot and boat. They would also visit Bell Island, which was for sale. The latter intimation affected Canning strangely. He wrote to Abraham Wesson about it directly he returned to his own rooms.

"Find out all about the property known as Bell Island in the Bristol Channel and write to me at once. I wish also to make a deed of gift of a thousand pounds to my friend Ernest Hobby of the Avenue, Wimbledon. Kindly see that this is carried through with as much dispatch as may be."

Old Abraham Wesson shook his head at this.

"Throwing his money about already," he said. "And buying a rock to begin with. Now, what will he do with that island when he's got it? Ah, I wonder?"

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CHAPTER VI

THE JOURNEY INTO SUFFOLK

WE make a familiar journey with reminiscence for our traveling companion; nor are there any other pleasures of the high road which speak with a tongue more eloquent than those of memory.

John Canning had made the journey from London to Cambridge many a time when he had been an undergraduate at King's—and now he traveled the familiar way once more, and for a little while was able to forget how long it had been since he was able to say, “quorum pars sum.” For he was going to his home in Suffolk—to his father's house as he had gone many a day in the summer of his youth.

It had been a pleasant journey then, when the healthy, vigorous lad went home to satisfy a dear mother that Cambridge had not starved him, and to lead the old farmer to wonder if rowing or Greek were the chief study in our English universities. Certainly the boy seemed more proficient in the one than the other; and as for his singing, for which King's had rewarded him with a scholarship, that

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the old fellow could not understand at all. No one had ever paid him to sing—and yet his rendering of some of Hatton's songs had shaken the village to its depths. But he was proud of his son, nevertheless, and a word of praise from old farmer Canning meant much, as all the countryside knew.

And now this son was coming home again, traveling the old road, after six long years of darkness and of silence. To John Canning nothing seemed changed in all that picture. Cambridge, as ever, was but a vista of ugly chimneys when viewed across the dirty plain about the station; the Cam, when he crossed it on the road to Ely, seemed alive with the very boats in which he had rowed nineteen years ago—showed the same figures playing the same part in the old water pageant; the same colors; the scarlets and blues and black in which these eternal heroes clothed themselves. Only the soul of the man was different, scarred and seared by the years, bearing its fruits of bitterness and regret. Cambridge, he reflected ironically, would be in no mood to honor him to-day. He realized that he would be ashamed to show his face in the university town, ashamed to be seen in any of those colleges which formerly he had frequented so proudly.

He had telegraphed for a dogcart to the hotel at Thetford, and this he found awaiting him at the station. New officials there knew nothing of "the

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convict" or his story. Indeed, they treated him with much deference, and as he drove through the town on the Honiton Road, he met more than one townsman who had known him and bestowed respectful salutation upon him.

These, in truth, were difficult to interpret. A locality is very loyal, and it may be that such worthy folk thought little the worse of one of their own members who had "bested" the Londoners. In any case young John Canning had conferred much notoriety upon the district; and where is the countryman who does not love notoriety or welcome eloquently the appearance of a "piece in the papers"?

And so they touched their hats to old Canning's son, and went to their homes to tell their wives and children that he was out of prison and gone over to Honiton to see his father. The man himself, astonished not a little at the reception, drove on meanwhile full of thought and of some little hope.

It was the hour of sunset then. The west showed a glorious heaven of fire, broken to great jagged peaks of golden light and crowned by a mighty tiara which searched the blackness of the cloud below as with the glow of flames immeasurable. A delicious scent of the new grass filled all the air. There were lanes of crab-apple trees bowed to their burdens; a spreading heath, wan and lonely but full of loveliness. All this would be a sea of heather by

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and by, Canning reflected, though few would launch the boats of a pilgrimage upon it. This vast desolation delighted him, for it ministered to his desire to escape from men. Let him build a hut upon this plain, and humanity might go unremembered to the end of his days.

He reflected upon it, letting the horse go as he would, and surveying all the prospect from the hill which rises above Euston Park and its cascades. His own village lay a little way beyond, and even as he descended the hill he met the local Methodist minister, John Tapp, riding toward Thetford on his bicycle. This worthy fellow had formerly been a carpenter; but he had spent many a long night in school, and could tell you more about Ruskin than some of the commentators. His welcome to "the convict" was frank and immediate.

"I'm heartily glad to see you, Mr. Canning," he said; "we heard that you were coming, but were not sure about the day. It's to make a long stay this time, I hope—you owe that to all of us."

"I fear not," Canning rejoined; "I have no plans, but I am afraid Honiton will not be amongst them when they are made. And how is everybody, Mr. Tapp? How is my father?"

"Poorly—very poorly. It's the head which troubles him. He hardly remembers a thing from day to day. But there's one person a father never

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forgets, and that's his only son. You'll give him great joy to-night, Mr. Canning; you'll make his heart lighter."

"Do you really believe that, Mr. Tapp?"

"I believe it as sure as I believe anything in this world. He'll kill the fatted calf when you come home. And there'll be no brothers to complain about it. You won't find Honiton changed, Mr. Canning. We never change down here. If you brought Oliver Cromwell to life, he'd find his way about Honiton just as he did when he was alive. Of course some of them are fathers and mothers of families who were only children when you were here. But that happens to all of us, and a poor thing for the country if it did not."

He went on in a lighter mood; but always returned to the assurance that the village would welcome the home-comer and had kept a warm place for him in their hearts. When Canning left him, it was with a promise to visit him on the following day and take tea with Mrs. Tapp; and hurrying on now he entered Honiton just as it was growing dark—but not so dark that Martin, the blacksmith, did not wish him a resounding "Good night, sir," nor every little girl drop him a curtsy. Truly did this excellent Tapp seem to be speaking the truth when he hinted that Honiton would not remember. Canning had planned twenty schemes of the knowl-

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edge when he entered the farm gates at last, and called for Mike to come and take the horse.

Just an old farmhouse, brick built and straggling, with a byre and stable upon the right hand, and an open straw-yard upon the left. People told you that it had been built in Tudor days, and pointed to terra cotta tiles with their Tudor roses still upon them. The beams and panelings were of English oak, brown and knotted and sagging above giant hearths where the logs blazed during the bitter winters. A great sitting-room to the right as you entered the house had been old John Canning's haven for ten years now. Here he lived his life, attended nights and mornings by old Betty, the road-maker's wife; but he was alone after sunset, and often slept in the great room with the doors of the house unbarred and open to any stranger who cared to enter them. Here his son found him; here they met after the black years.

"Father, it is I, John—did you not expect me, father? I have just come from London—surely they told you?"

The old man, whose long white hair straggled down upon his bent shoulders, sat in a great arm-chair by the window. Despite the warmth of the day a little fire blazed upon the open hearth, and gave a welcome suggestion of homeliness; but, save for the figure of the master, the room seemed but

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little changed since John Canning had left home. The same dominating oak bookcase still boasted its family Bible and copy of *Southwell's Book of Martyrs*. The press for the linen stood over against the southern wall; there were the alabaster figures under glass cases, which his mother had loved. The chief actor in the scene alone bore witness to the passing of the years, for he was now bent down to the earth which should engulf him presently. His life was lived; he hardly recognized his son.

"Who is it?" he asked, and then, "Is that you, Michael? Why do you stand there—what do you say?"

"It is I, father—your son, John. You must know me. Look at me and say—it is your son."

He knelt at his father's side and pressed the trembling hands to his forehead. A child's desire for love and the servitudes of affection overcame him. He was John Canning, the boy, come home from Cambridge and fresh from his mother's embrace.

"Father, you know me now?"

"Ay, ay—my son John. They told me you had gone away. Come nearer, lad—ay, my son. Well, well, these be strange times surely. Was it from Cambridge, did you say? Ay, and the old mother not here, the old mother gone from us. A true woman that, John—and your mother. Did you see

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Michael as you crossed the yard? My eyes are that poor I can see nothing. Give me my glasses, lad—help me to my feet.”

He put out palsied hands and felt all about him as though the touch would help the deficiencies of sight. The misery, the desolation, the silence of the house filled his son with awe. Here his father had endured this living death for more than five years. Was it because of what had been? He did not believe that it was, and yet the dread that it might be remained.

“Let me give you my arm, father. Do you wish to go out? I will take you. We will go down the village together. You should not be alone. Why do they leave you like this? Where are they all?”

He spoke at hazard, and obtained an answer without intelligence. The old woman, Betty, advised by the blacksmith that the young master had come home, now appeared at the door of the room and dropped a sweeping curtsy. She was logical enough, for she had just emerged from the ale house where her faculties had been refreshed.

“They told me Master John had come home,” she began, “and that I would not believe. I hope I see Mr. Canning well—I hope you find the Squire better, sir? Lord, he have been that poorly this winter time. Such a cough, such trouble in his limbs—but he’ll be better for seeing Master John



"June!" he cried in amazement.

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surely, and I wish you welcome, sir, with all my heart."

She went on to add that Benson, the innkeeper, had driven to Ingham station with the dogcart, and would return presently with the meat for supper. Her activities were remarkable under this startling provocation of the young Squire's return, and she did not forget her *rôle* of gossip. Canning had the five years' news of Honiton as it were in a breath. He was right glad to take his father out for a little air, and to escape the harridan's tongue.

"Why do you put up with that old woman, father?" he asked, as they went; "why don't you have proper servants? Surely there are many who would be glad to serve the Squire. You must be very uncomfortable with such an attendant as that?"

"Ay, my lad; but what would I do with servants? I've but a few years before me, and want 'em for my own. When you've lived as long as I have, you'll come to say that a man is better alone. Let me go a little slower, John—I'm not the man I was, as you can see. Ay, time does march, to be sure, and the quicker he goes the slower we get. Is that the parson yonder or another? I be half blind most days and don't know night from morning. This will be something extra for the village, John—my word, how folks will talk!"

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This latter thought appeared to give him both pride and consolation; and Canning now perceived that some very real emotion had prompted the pilgrimage abroad. This fine old fellow had gloried in his son's success, though it meant nothing to him personally—for every penny John had sent to him had been faithfully banked at Thetford, and lay there still as a hidden treasure of which he alone guarded the secret. When the crash came, old farmer Canning but dimly perceived its meaning. The Londoners had been too much for the lad; but he would yet hold his own. It may be that he felt the shame very keenly—his son always suspected that it was so; but here at Honiton, on this night of his return, he could say that his suspicions were ill-founded. Was not his father now showing him proudly to that little world wherein his life had been lived? "My son John, who was such a great man in London." Ah, the pity of it all!

They traversed the main street and stood a little while before the old church, its early English tower blackly silhouetted against a mellow sky. Here father and son had worshiped together many a Sunday; here old John Canning had led his wife to the altar; here his little baby girl had been buried and often mourned. The church was the centre of the Squire's spiritual world, as the village of his material hopes. He loved to linger in its shadow;

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liked well to recall the names of dead friends, and to remember the neighborly acts they had done him. To-night, perhaps, his thoughts were more concerned with the living and their eulogies. They also must welcome his son—they must know that young John had come back to Honiton, and that the village was honored by his coming.

And so the tour was made—to the cottages, the parsonage, and the inn. When they returned the old fellow was quite exhausted, and spoke but rarely during the simple supper the old woman had prepared. Ten o'clock found him in his bedroom, and at half-past his son walked in the gardens of his old home and wondered, as he smoked his last cigar, if he would ever see Honiton or his father again.

What hope had he here? What content could this kindly absolution bring him? He might reward these people richly, and yet reward them to their undoing. His affection for his father could take no overt shape, for he perceived that the day of circumstance had gone by. Better by far leave things as they were, and go out into the world to conquer—as he must conquer with the power of money at his command. If he had any consolations of his visit, they were those of his father's pride and love. The old fellow appeared to know nothing of the shame—John was still his beloved son, and must be feasted and set upon his right hand.

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This, at least, Canning believed, and in this he rejoiced. Come what might, there remained one to honor him; one roof beneath which he would find a throne.

He finished his cigar in the silent garden, and returned leisurely toward the house. Honiton was fast asleep by this time, and not a sound broke in upon its rest. His own home, showing lighted windows, took a picturesque shape in the darkness, but remained a home of phantoms—of the dead who had been his kinsfolk, of the living from whom he was separated by so impassable a gulf. So vivid were the impressions that when he perceived a figure in the dining room before him, he was quite prepared to place it also among the phantasmagoria of his brain. Here, however, imagination deluded him, for the figure was that of a living man; of one who acted no longer a part to deceive the villagers, but spoke all his mind in a frenzy of shame and anger which sleep had been unable to control.

Thus the truth came; thus was deception made known—the son standing in the porch, the father believing himself alone in the house as he had been alone so many nights. Vain words of the shame came incoherently now from old Canning's lips, as though the dam of speech had been suddenly released, and all the torrent of the past released. He,

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John Canning, whom all men had honored, thus to bring a convict into the world. His only son—the son whom he had loved, that he should be ashamed of him! Again and again he repeated the frenzied words, tottering to and fro with feeble steps, shielding his eyes with a palsied hand, crying to his dead wife to bear witness—an awful accusing figure, from whom even the strongest might have shrunk in horror. And the son shrank from it, burying his face in his hands and fleeing the house. Good God! that it should be this—that the night should have revealed what the day had hidden!

For hours Canning walked the silent lanes praying for the day. This village had become as a place accursed. Plainly he had no longer any hope in England. He thought of all that had happened since the hour of his release—the acquisition of fortune; the contempt and then the fawning apologies of friends and acquaintances; the discovery that the woman he loved had been the first to forget him; the advice of many, “make a new home in a new country.” Ambition warred against the truth, spurned it, would have defied it. His old craving for power and dominance troubled him anew with a thousand temptations.

He would yet win men’s homage, compel a wom-

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an's love, beget children who would honor him. The rising sun put a seal upon his resolution. He left Honiton secretly, walking to a remote country station and taking the train thence for London.

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BOOK II
THE ISLAND

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CHAPTER VII

THE BEACON

JESSE of the Pharos had almost come up to the gate of the Castle when she detected the glare of the beacon, over upon the eastward side of the island, and she set off at once to run down toward the sea.

After all, her errand had been quixotic enough, and she welcomed any excuse to abandon it. For what right had she to be at the Castle at all now that the unknown Englishman had purchased it and was coming over to be the lord of Bell Island and the master of its people?

None had questioned her title hitherto, and she had come and gone as she pleased. But these were new days, and must bring submission—if not of pride at least of custom. Jesse reflected with a heavy heart that the gates of the Castle would be shut upon her henceforth. Had not the word gone out to the people—her father's word, the word of a man whom all obeyed and would obey: "No truck with the stranger—closed doors and barred windows and silence always"—for what right had he

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upon Bell Island? What title but that of his money, which these simple folk despised?

She understood the truth but dimly during the first days of its propagation; but now, at this summons from the sea, she understood it wholly. The glorious night of summer, the lowering clouds, the south wind moaning in the gulf, above all the beacon's glow shimmering over yonder against the giant cliffs, were not these true harbingers? A ship had been sighted, she said, and was putting into the harbor. The day of the truth was at hand. Tomorrow must bring the strangers in among them.

She ran with light steps and naked feet, the wind playing havoc with her unkempt hair, and tossing it about her shapely white neck. But twenty years old, she had the limbs of a grown woman, the fine rounded limbs of one who had put no restraints upon nature since the days of her early childhood. A quick, active brain, given to odd contrasts, troubled her with many thoughts, but chiefly those of the scene before her. Who had kindled the beacon, and why? None knew the secrets of deep and shore so well as she. The signal had been made, she said presently, to wreck the Englishman's ship and bring it upon the dreaded Spanish Rock. There could be no other reason. Her father, he whom they called old Japhon of the Pharos, he had spoken and the men had obeyed him. Jesse shiv-

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ered at the knowledge. Must they not answer for such a deed as this?

Answer, but to whom? Did the law of England run, then, in that little island but ten miles from the coast of Devon? Would English ships be sent because an English ship had been lost? Old Japhon, scarred and fierce and masterful, would have laughed at such a story. Was he not the magistrate, and did not Roger Bard, his henchman, act for constable? What had Bell Island to do with the law? Yesterday any man might have answered the question, but to-night some hesitated to answer it. A new master was coming among them—coming to rule at the old stone house they called in all good faith “the Castle.” He would bring the Law to be his servant—a story at which rugged heads were shaken and coarse beards were pulled. Let God take the man’s ship while it was yet at sea, and that would be the end of it. A fig for the Law, then—for what had the Law to do with the Spanish Rock?

Jesse, be it said, was still among the law-abiding. She did not wish the stranger to come to Bell Island, but would have done nothing to keep him away. A woman’s heart rebelled against the treachery—a woman’s curiosity wished the voyager ashore. While with one voice she mourned her departing liberty, with another she condemned the

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ruse which would establish liberty. Were not those wild sons of the sea gathered down yonder like vultures awaiting their prey? Were not they, her friends, about to work a treachery? Skirting the great cliff fearlessly, she looked down into the abyss and spied out their hiding-place. There were five of them, she said, with old Abe Benson at their head. And they had kindled a fire of tar barrels, and watched the flames as the wreckers of old times many a night in the famous days.

Now, it was a black dark night, and an angry sea racing in the dangerous channel which lies between Bell Island and the shores of Devon. Southward, the Government lighthouse flashed alternate stars of white and crimson, but sent no beam to discover the English ship. Nor could Jesse's keen eyes espy it in the intervals of clouds. Lying there at full length upon the very edge of a monstrous cliff, the beacon burning brightly below her, the weird voices of storm ringing in her ears, she peered into the darkness and asked of it the secrets. Who was this stranger, and why did he come to Bell Island? Would he bring a wife with him, or come alone? The woman put these questions, but Japhon's daughter answered them. Frank Benson had done this thing, she said. No other but Abe Benson's son would have been clever enough to think of it; the son who had whispered wild words of love into

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her ears not an hour ago, and had persecuted her these many months. Jesse laughed lightly at the memory, and with something of the savage in her tone. Evidently she was not unwilling that men should strive for her, and consent to their endeavors now sent her to the shore.

She would go down and face the wreckers! The resolution came instantly, and was not to be gainsaid. Dangerous as the path might be, difficult the way, she, Jesse, would face the peril that the stranger might come safely to Bell Island. And now she was glad that her feet had been trained to the cliff's path, and that no fashion of civilization encumbered her. Clinging surely to root and shrub, she began to descend the cliff in the darkness. The wind beat upon her, but did not daunt her. She looked straight down at the surging waters and had no fear of them. Yes, she might fall, but that would be but as a dream of her sleep—downward in an ecstasy of flight, as a bird that swoops upon its prey. Such wild thoughts were inborn and of her very being. She dwelt upon the situation, and remembered that men would call her brave.

And so step by step down the cliff side until she leaped upon the plateau, some fifty feet from the waters, and confronted the astonished men. Given to the common superstitions of the island, half ashamed of their occupation, dreading unknown

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penalties, they sprang up at her coming as at that of an accuser. Frank, Abe Benson's son, alone stood firm. He watched her covertly and with pride.

"What do you do here—what does this mean?" she asked them wildly. Not a man but her uncouth lover could answer her; and he with voice ironical.

"We are trying to put the stranger's ship on the Spanish Rock. It was your father's orders."

"My father's! Say that to his face and I'll believe it."

And then quickly she cried, "Cowards! Do you think that you will go unpunished? I will tell the English stranger myself."

Some one laughed in the darkness and muttered an aside, to the end that it would be well enough to tell the English stranger when he came ashore.

The others sat doggedly, watching the deceiving flame. It was just like old Japhon's daughter to come down here and play the part of Mistress Mar All. Yet not a man of them dared to tell her so, although she was already busy upon their handiwork. Yes, "truth," as that drunken fellow Tom Weeds informed the island on the morrow, she beat out the fire with one of their own brands, burning her pretty feet and arms while she did it, and calling them cowards all the while. And this was the

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more unfortunate because, just as the dripping flame went seething into the water, the English yacht was in the very cove's mouth, and would have been on the Spanish Rock before a man could have counted twenty. They heard the captain roar "Luff!" and saw the ship go about. And still they did not speak.

The maddened girl beat down the flames, but not before they vignetted her face and arms, and so fired them about in the golden light that those at sea had a fine vision to guide them. Another age would have spoken of a miracle and of the seaman's Madonna coming to their aid. As the thing went, those on the ship, when they had time to breathe again, asked a common question, "Who is she?" and being answered "Old Japhon's daughter, the man of the Pharos," were as wise as before.

Though in truth the captain added—

"She were always mad, little Jesse, but a lady for sure, which nobody will gainsay."

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CHAPTER VIII

AN ISLAND LOVER

THE men left the cove one by one, silent, but not ashamed. There would be no English ship in the harbor of Bell Island to-night, and God alone could answer for the morrow. Their glances askance at Jesse were not of fear, but of that gaucherie of their manhood which would not reason with a woman, knowing her to be in the right, but rejoicing in their own wrong. Abe Benson's son alone remained, and he went over and sat by Jesse's side upon a ledge of the rock overlooking the racing waters.

Now here was one of the island's children who had been educated on the mainland—over at Newent in Gloucestershire; a sleek curly-haired young fellow who spent his days hanging about old Japhon's gardens, and his nights writing tragedies which never would be played. To him Jesse was Divinity—yet with something sour in the ritual of worship, and a feeling that he would have done better for himself over in England. A very passionate lover, he would have been a dangerous one for a

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little more courage and something added to his resolution. But Jesse could silence him in an instant when she was of the mind, and once she had struck him—a blow he would harbor against the day of his opportunities. For the rest he had not the smallest doubt that he would marry her some day—though marriage, to be sure, was less in his mind than possession, for which he planned both day and night.

This was the lover who now crossed to Jesse's side and sat there for a little while in silence. The darkness upon the sea had been broken for a moment by a blue light on the yacht's deck, and after that by the rockets which the English skipper fired to learn his position. When these had sunk hissing into the sea, and the English ship had been headed northward, Franklin ventured to speak to Jesse.

"Why did you do it, Jesse? You know your father wished it?"

"My father! How can you say that, Frank?"

"Oh, I don't mean that he asked them to do it or anything of that sort. But we know what he wanted. I should have thought you would have been loyal to us. Surely you don't want a stranger lording it up at the Castle? That won't suit you any more than it will suit us. Bell Island has belonged to our own people for five hundred years. Why should we put up with foreigners?"

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"Because we are too poor to keep them out. Oh, you are all mad. What would have happened if the ship had gone ashore, and the Englishman had been saved? Murderers—are you all murderers, Frank?"

He laughed with some sense of the shame.

"We should have got them out with the rocket apparatus. Don't say we are monsters, Jesse."

She looked him full in the face.

"You would not have stirred a hand to save them. It is a lie, Frank. Why do you tell it to me?"

"Well, if you won't listen—— But perhaps you know the Englishman. Perhaps you want him here, Jesse? He'll be asking you up to the Castle, and that sort of thing. Oh, yes, I understand it all. Fine goings on, and Jesse at the head of them. Well, I shan't stand that, anyway. I tell you so before the man comes ashore."

"The man! What right have you to speak of him in that way?"

"Call him my master, then. Will that please you? Shall I doff my cap to him, Jesse? I tell you this, I wouldn't do it if he were the King of England. Don't you understand what this place means to us all? We're a free people; we have our liberties, our religion——"

"Religion—oh!"

She laughed long and drolly, her fine sense of irony responding to the humor. Jesse was mostly

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self-taught, but the Celt in her revolted at the hypocrisy, and lost no opportunity of condemning it.

"Your religion which would have made murderers of you to-night. Oh, preserve that, please. Set a temple on the hill for your religion!"

"Well, you know what I mean—and I'll tell you this: You'd better be careful. The people will stand no nonsense. They have made up their mind that this man Canning shall not live at the Castle, and they won't put up with interference from you. No more will your father, I know. Ask him when you go home to-night. I speak in your interests, Jesse. You know what it would mean to me if any harm came to you."

"Oh, yes, yes, you would make a play of it—and go to London to sell it. Are you still making plays, Frank? Why don't you put your brother Irwin into one? Tell the people how he treated Nance Weede. That's what they like in plays, if the papers are to be believed."

He shuffled at the rebuke.

"Irwin's a blackguard. I shouldn't wonder if he got on with your Englishman fine. Mark you, Jesse, if you make a friend of a man like that, no good will come of it. Your father's a big man here, but he would be less than the servants in the Englishman's house. Don't you forget that. No good would come of anything of that sort, and if harm

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came of it I would kill him—so help me, God, I would kill him.”

“My poor, dear Frank, how terrible! Is this also to be in the play? And you so brave. Are you sure you have the courage to do it, Frank?”

He stood up and shook his fist at the black face of the sea.

“I wish to God he had been drowned this night,” he cried, and then—“What’s your interest in him? Oh, a fine gentleman, with a gold chain to put round your neck, and diamonds for your ears! Hussies like such things, and you’re going begging for them. I told them it would be so. Do what you like, I said, Jesse Fearney will get the better of you. She wants the Englishman ashore. She’s waiting to go up to him whenever he sends for her—that’s Jesse—that’s the girl who’s been your mistress——”

He was shaking with rage and passion, and almost incoherent in the quest of insult. But Jesse, rising without a word, began to descend the path to the hamlet, and did not answer him a single word.

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CHAPTER IX

JESSE VISITS THE CASTLE

JAPHON of the Pharos lived on the northeastern shore of Bell Island, in an old squat farmhouse, from whose windows you could see the Devon shore. Sixty-two years had he been master of the house, and his father nearly sixty before him. Of French descent, the people of Auvergne had known the family by the name of Fernier—but whenever old Japhon had need of a surname, he called himself Fearney, for that was a name Bell Island could understand.

Let it be said that this need was rare. To all the people he was old Japhon of the Pharos—for his house was built where a Roman beacon had stood, and the full style was his by all right of tradition. A vain, crabbed, self-centred old man, he might have been a born Puritan out of East Anglia, and no Celtic man from France. So much, at least, a student would have argued, though the island troubled but little about it. Sufficient for the people that his word was law, and that he was their lord for lack of any other.

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Jesse, his only child, had lost her mother when she was but eleven years of age. From that time she enjoyed the liberties of Bell Island, mainly asserted by an aversion from shoes and stockings, and a propensity for riding the family ass astride. Three governesses had come and gone, and left her but little advanced in the desirable arts. She could not play the piano, and stolidly refused to sing a note. A drawing master from Truro declared that her gifts with the pencil were amazing, and should be cultivated—a tribute she rewarded by caricature. In this latter gift she excelled, and it was commonly said that the islanders were more afraid of her pencil than of old Japhon's tongue.

In justice it should be written that the old man's seeming indifference had its excuses. Why should he forbid Jesse to roam among the seven-and-fifty people who constituted the population of the island? Were they not fishermen, or the sons and wives and daughters of fishermen? Was there one among them who would dare to pay anything but respect to Japhon Fearney's daughter? He did not believe it. Let the girl go or come as she pleased—Bell Island stood but for the garden of her home.

Hence Jesse's freedom—hence her being abroad after ten o'clock of a summer's night, when the fishermen were gathered together in the Spanish cove and the English ship sought the harbor. In

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truth, it was nearly eleven when she climbed the steep path to the farmhouse door and passed up to her room by the kitchen stair. To Hannah, the confidential maid, she merely whispered a question, and was answered fairly.

"Yes, master have gone to bed—I told him you were in an hour ago."

So the girl crept up to her room; and moving about it with secret steps, she bethought her of all that had happened this night and must happen tomorrow. A stranger at the Castle, which the true lords of Bell Island, that unhappy family of the Morencys, had so long neglected. All changed, all new in the life of the people. The closed gates reopened, the dusty rooms swept out—perhaps music and laughter where there had been silence and gloom. Jesse would have been no woman had the thought displeased her. Alone here, she despised the cant of loyalty and opposition. What wrong had the Englishman done to these people? Let them cry out when they were hurt.

She slept upon it, yet slept but ill. The "might be" tortured her with strange doubts. Deep down in her heart was the desire of man's love, the rebellion against circumstance, the Celtic embers smouldering. Surely she was not born to be the wife of such a man as Frank Benson, a fisherman's son, for all his education? The belief possessed her

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that she would yet go forth from Bell Island to reign in some distant kingdom. And this was a haunting thought, and it drove her from her bed before the sun was up and sent her, barefooted, and with a heavy knitted shawl about her neck and shoulders, across the turf toward the Castle. She would visit it for the last time. There would be no other opportunity, for the Englishman must land this day.

Now, the Castle stands facing the southeast—a long, low house, turreted and embattled; but all done in the primitive fashion, as any manor house on the mainland; and no more entitled to be called a castle, perhaps, than your suburban villas upon Hampstead Heath.

True, some of its rooms were grand enough, and more than one of them boasted fine paneling, and ceilings so wrought over with Tudor roses and fleurs-de-lis that even the Philistine might admire them. Some of its furniture was famous, and had come from Paris in the days following upon the Revolution. A music room could show you an ancient organ with a fine carved case, and a piano of Chopin's time. There were a few books in the library, and some highly colored monkish work between their covers. But all said and done, the place was no more than a big, rambling house, with some pretty terraces overlooking the sea, and a great

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stone wall to shut out the Danes—should excursion bring those very desirable guests to English waters.

Jesse Fearney knew every stone of this ancient building. Its doors had never been closed to her since the Morencys deserted it. For who should close them? Not Martin, the keeper thereof, or his good wife Sarah, not the agent who lived at Bideford and rarely crossed the waters. So she roamed where she pleased; spent long days in the old library; hunted the armories, laid bare the cupboards. "It be natural to see her here," old Martin said. And truly, that was so. She was just the figure for such a house as that.

Jesse crossed the open grass land about three o'clock of this summer's morning, and arrived at the Castle gate at four. The sun was just up in the eastern sky then, and a shimmer of light danced upon the hither waters. A glance out to sea showed her no English yacht nor any strange ship. The boats of her own people were but specks upon a hazy horizon—the loom of the smoke hovered above the cottages of the cove, and spoke of women already awake and watching there. But the Castle itself had no story to tell her, save that of its new owners' probable return to the English shore; and this consoling her, she dared its silent courtyard and entered the house.

This would have been a difficult task for any

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other, but easy for Jesse. Not a watch-dog but knew her step, and squatted fawning at her approach. The great barred windows flashing to the lights of morning, were no harbingers of defeat to her. The bolted doors did not detain her, for she passed them by swiftly; and running round to the old Bell Tower, she pushed open the tiny wicket at its foot, and thus gained the narrow stairway within. Thence a second door admitted her to the Long Gallery—that proud apartment which is Bell Island's glory, its one title to magnificence.

Here Jesse stood a while, breathless and doubting. A sun of morning, winging pale beams through the long windows of the alcoves, searched the gallery to its depths and declared a haunting emptiness, which afflicted her with new thoughts. Never before had she been conscious of such mingled emotions of awe and solitude. Spirits of the past might have breathed upon her while she stood. She gazed as in a trance at the monstrous portraits of dead Morencys, at the vast oaken coffers, the broad benches, the fantastic tapestries; and each whispered the echo of a story. Dead warriors lived again in that instant, noble women were the figures of the gallery. All the play of courtly comedies, the magnificence, the pageantry of the house warred in imagination upon its abiding emptiness. Swiftly as the visions came, they passed as swiftly—to leave

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the girl panting and afraid—she who had never known fear on Bell Island since she was old enough to know anything at all.

Jesse laughed at herself for this experience, though she liked it but ill. Her conceit of life had been supreme hitherto, but this was a blow upon it. If her dreaming left any clearly defined impression at all, it was that of her own presumption in thus intruding upon so famous a company. Now, for the first time, she understood vaguely what is meant by heritage and the privileges of birth. Was she not but a farmer's daughter, and was not this famous room consecrated to the nobles of old time? A sense of shame and humiliation accompanied the awakening to the truth. The Englishman who had bought the Castle, surely he also had been born to such a heritage. She could imagine no other than a noble reigning upon Bell Island, and she believed that it must be so. A little later on, running to one of the windows of the alcove, she gazed over toward the English coast and wondered if his ship were yet in sight. Of course he would be an aristocrat, and he would people these silent rooms with the splendid figures which were their due.

There are no qualities of silence so potent in impressions as those of the early morning hours. Jesse had visited the Long Gallery many a day, but never at such an hour as this. Looking out wist-

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fully over the great rolling downs which lie between the Castle and the sea, she remembered that hers had been the sovereignty, hers the dominion until that eventful day. Men had paid her homage, women their tribute of envy. She had come and gone as she willed. Jesse of the Pharos always, but Jesse the Queen where men's hearts were in the balance. And now the sceptre must be laid down. This Englishman would bring a wife to Bell Island. Henceforth, she, Jesse, would be but farmer Fearney's daughter.

She sighed at the thought, and turned away from the window. Some torn page of a forgotten philosophy preached the word that these things must be. Yet a little stubbornly she asked *why* must they be. What did she lack of wit, of beauty or of youth that the strangers would possess? To be sure, she had no finery to speak of, and the dead beaux would blush to see the shapely bare feet which now trod the gallery. Here humor became her saving grace, and laughing lightly she went over to an old coffer in an embrasure of the window and lifted therefrom an ancient robe. Oh, yes, trust a woman to have discovered this long ago, this precious heritage which the Morencys had guarded so faithfully. Did not the Princess Mary wear that very gown when there was a great ball at the Castle to celebrate Trafalgar day? Jesse knew the story—she could

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also tell you exactly how the dress must be folded, for she had folded it many a time.

And now she put it on, laughing at herself for the drollery. Little as England had loved France in those famous days, this splendid robe had caught something of the Empire fashion, and fitted the young girl's figure to perfection. Ah, the gold and fine brocade, the soft, shining silk, the jewels broidered into the panels! True, it had not been designed to go with stockingless legs and wild unkempt black hair tossing rebelliously upon bare shoulders—but Jesse could laugh at that as she stood before the old gold-framed mirror and asked herself what sort of a picture the farmer's daughter made. Was it a picture that the Princess Mary of old time would have envied? Vanity perched upon a white shoulder said that it was. The Englishman also was of that opinion.

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CHAPTER X

FLIGHT FOLLOWS DISCOVERY

JESSE heard the click of the lock with ears trained to all the omens of sound. So great was her dread of discovery, that for an instant she was afraid to turn her head. Who came at such an hour? Not old Martin, she knew his step, not Sarah, his wife, for her shuffle would have discovered her. A stranger then, and undoubtedly from England. And so the fear passed, and shame unutterable took its place.

Now, John Canning had come ashore last night after all, and slept in the first bedroom old Sarah could prepare for him. His object was chiefly curious. He wished to see this famous Bell Island he had purchased, to learn something of its people, to know whether he would do well to make his habitation on its shores. A stormy passage, a little humor upon the fisherman's part (as his skipper assured him) were of no account at all. These did not deter him. He slept soundly enough through four good hours, and awoke to this pattering of

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pretty feet—or should it be, to the habit four years and more of prison had fostered?

The question concerned him but little. Be sure it concerned Jesse not at all. Sufficient for her to see in the glass both the object discovered and the figure of the discoverer. A tall man, finely built, but with the seal of care upon his handsome face—for his dress little to be said, save that it was Eastern and flowered, and had been vended by a West End hosier as the very latest thing in *recherché* dressing gowns. To an observer the contrast would have been humorous to the point of absurdity. But these two found it mighty serious—the man surely believing that he had discovered a mad girl in the house, and she, that the day of humiliation would never be forgotten.

He crossed the floor with bare feet, and touched her upon the shoulder.

“My good girl!” he exclaimed in the best paternal manner, “what on earth does this mean?”

Jesse took off her brodered robe and, having folded it very carefully, she laid it again in the coffer whence she had taken it.

“I thought that I was alone,” she said at last, but so deliberately and in such a tone that his attention was instantly arrested.

“Are you one of the servants of the house?”

“Servants—oh!”

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"I beg your pardon—I mean are you the house-keeper's daughter? Surely you must tell me why you have the right to be here."

"I have no right—I am the daughter of Japhon Fearney, who keeps the farm. Sometimes I come here—when the house is empty."

She stood in one of the alcoves, gazing wistfully toward her home. The man sat upon an oak bench and watched her critically. The face won less upon his attention than the charm of the voice, and the bewitching pride of the pose. She was like a bird which had been trapped in a room by a foolish flight, and now poised itself in sullen and repentant submission. A touch of the hand to the window and the bird would fly away. John Canning did not feel moved to such an act of humanity. He had no desire whatever to open the door of the cage.

"I have heard of your father," he said presently; "you would be Miss Jesse. Report says that both of you are very angry with me. Is that true?"

She turned upon him, quite fearless now, and looked him straight into the face.

"We do not want strangers upon the island. It is natural. They know nothing of the people. We have lived here so long that nowhere else could be a home to us. You come here because you have money and want a fine house. You will be the

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master, and my father will be nobody. You cannot expect him to wish you welcome."

"Oh, I don't. Is he one of those who lighted a fire on the cliff side to wreck my yacht last night?—I hope not."

She started, and flushed crimson.

"My father was not among them."

"I am very glad of that—for some of them will certainly go to prison."

Jesse turned away her head and did not speak. Here was the open challenger—this stranger against Bell Island, the glove thrown down instantly, the cynicism of possession so soon displayed. For the time being she disliked the newcomer very much, and passed wholly to the people's side.

"I will tell them what you say!" she exclaimed almost fiercely; "they will be very much afraid—I will tell them that you are sending them to prison."

He raised his eyebrows, watching her critically.

"That would be hardly a fair story," he rejoined, "since I have nothing to do with it."

"Then why do you say so? Why do you speak to me like this?"

"To warn you—lest any friends of yours were foolish enough to be out last night. Let us have no misunderstanding. I don't care twopence about myself—I like an independent people. But there are others less liberal in their views, and the com-

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mander of the cruiser *Marathon* is one of them. He was off here in his ship last night; and if I do not misunderstand my own captain, he has sent a wireless message ashore. So, you see, we begin with trouble upon Bell Island, although I have nothing to do with it."

Jesse heard him patiently. The feeling that an undercurrent of mockery flowed beneath the smooth speech provoked her to antagonism. He was laughing while he told her that he did not care.

"My friends will be very much obliged to you," she said, with a jerk of her shoulder which would have expressed indifference; "of course they were very foolish—boys always are."

"Boys! Is Abe Benson a boy?"

"Oh, then you know?"

"I know perfectly—the names are all written down for me. I shall keep them as a souvenir of my first visit to this house. They will go very well with that ancient garment in which you did me the honor to receive me. Oh, do not be angry—I quite understand."

She looked at him wonderingly. Was this kindness or the jest? Did he really understand her—the foolish romanticism, the vain silliness which had provoked the act? or was he but mocking her again? Jesse knew not what to believe. She had never felt so ashamed.

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"I am sorry that I did it," she said quite frankly; "if I had known that you had come——"

"I am glad that you did not. If my visit is to shut this house to you, I will certainly stay away. Tell your people also that I wish to come among them as a friend. Repeat to them what I have said. They must not get into trouble; but, on the other hand, they must learn to act like men. Tell them I will have no more nonsense. Should there be any, they will soon find out who is master."

She promised to do so, vaguely, as a child who is scolded and must respond in platitudes. The daring of her intrusion now took a share in her thoughts, and moved her to a quick decision to quit a house whose master had the right thus to address her.

"I shall tell them," she said quietly. "Of course, I myself must not come here again—I am sorry to have been found here this morning. Please let me say good-by."

She moved toward the door at the farther end, but he followed her quickly, and held it open for her to pass.

"Good-by," he said, holding out his hand, "and do not forget."

"Oh, I shan't do that," she cried, and so she left him.

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CHAPTER XI

JESSE IS QUESTIONED BY HER FATHER

It was six o'clock of the morning when Jesse quitted the Castle, and nearly a quarter to seven when she arrived at the farm. The promise of dawn had not been fulfilled, and gloomy clouds now gathered in the west to focus a clear gray light upon the green downs, and to show the whole extent of Bell Island as though it were figured upon a draughtsman's plan. A swell of an angry sea still surged in the Channel, while over toward England, the sun still shone brightly upon the foaming water and the spreading sails of the ships.

Be it said that the life of the island lay almost wholly upon the shore. Few of the fishermen had any time for husbandry, and such as were disposed to a landsman's occupation farmed no more than a few acres down by the cove where the cottages stood. Old Japhon's farm was of some extent, but lay almost wholly on the northeastern shore; a pasture farm chiefly, but growing sufficient good wheat for the fishermen's daily bread. For the rest the Morencys owned the land—or had owned

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it until a lawyer's deed transferred it to the Englishman, of whose very name the people were ignorant.

Here was an affair which concerned them but little. They lived on the seashore—the sea fed and clothed them. Daring sailors, knowing both the inner channels and the open deep, they cruised afar, following the herring in the summer months to the North of Scotland, and coming down with the shoals even to the bays of Devon. Such occupation made them comparatively rich, and they spent long, bleak winters at their cottage doors, or if not there, then upon the little patches of fertile soil which should give them vegetables during the summer.

To all such, the man of affairs was Japhon Fearney. He had been the Morencys' agent in the old days—he held power from the Government under an old charter to minister, to marry, and to bury. A zealot for a simple type of congregational Christianity, he preached to these people on the Sabbath and sat in judgment upon them during the week. From him they bought the flour to knead their bread, the wool to make their clothes—and, indeed, they feared him exceedingly, believing him to be greater than the lawyers, whose figures loomed up beyond a far horizon as the very personification of the Evil One.

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For Japhon Fearney the sale of Bell Island was a tragedy indeed. If tradition were to be believed, his savings were so considerable that he had once made a bid for the property himself; and, believing that there would be no other purchaser in the field, had quarreled over a matter of some sixteen hundred pounds. Now he heard, without any warning, that a stranger had purchased the Castle, and was coming over immediately to take possession. Not only was this a sore blow to his pride, but a sharp rebuke upon his imprudence—for, as he told himself, he had publicly declared the amount of his fortune by his offer for the property, and could not afterwards deny his possession. Let men ask how Japhon Fearney, the farmer, came to possess more than twenty thousand pounds, and there would be a difficulty in answering them. He had dreaded such inquiries many a day; he dreaded them exceedingly now that John Canning, the Englishman, was coming to the Castle.

This was the Japhon Fearney who met Jesse, his daughter, as she returned from her escapade, and at once guessed her secret. A burly, formidable, repulsive figure, the old man stood at the little white gate of the farm while the girl crossed the Downs and watched her closely. His daughter, yes; he was proud of her for that, proud of her pretty face, proud of her pride—but being proud he was not the

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less afraid. Men know well enough when a woman has a mind of her own—and young as she was, Japhon Fearney already had experience both of Jesse's obstinacy and of her logic. So he watched her doubtingly as she came to the gate, and lifting his shaggy brows at her approach, he shook his stick threateningly.

"What takes you from the house, girl? Where have you been?"

"I've been to the Castle, father."

He had expected the answer, and yet it took him aback. Did not report say that John Canning landed from the yacht last night?

"You've bin up there? What took 'ee, girl? What fool's errand is this?"

"I go there often, father—they did not tell me that the Englishman had arrived."

"Then ye saw him, girl?"

"I saw him—he spoke to me."

"Ay, ay, he'd do that quick enough. Were they pleasant words he said?"

"He wishes the people to behave themselves. If they do not, they will hear of it."

"D'ye mean that he says that to me?"

"To all of us. We are to be his obedient servants. He will stand no nonsense." She uttered the words deliberately—looking her father full in the face and following with keen eyes the twitching of that ex-

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pressive mouth. Her father was angry, surely—but one of the lessons of his life had been to control anger, and he did not forget it in this moment. Jesse did not mean to set him against the Englishman, but a certain obstinacy of her pride compelled her to do so, and left her glad that she had spoken.

“He’s a brave man, surely. I could give him a life up yonder, if I said the word. Behave myself! Ay, I’ll do that! Let him say the words to my face and he shall have my answer. Is he what they would call a fine man, girl? Has he a head on him?”

“He is over six feet tall, father, and has jet-black hair. I think he is very strong, but has been ill. His voice is kind, when he chooses. He is a gentleman, and wears beautiful clothes.”

“Where did you see him, child? How did you come to meet him?”

“I thought there was no one at the Castle, and I went up to the Long Gallery. He came in before I could leave.”

“Did he forbid you the house?”

“Oh, no; he asked me to go back. ‘And mind you tell the people,’ he said. I promised him I would, and so I begin by telling you.”

It was all very bold and very defiant, nor had Japhon Fearney the wit to read the enigma. Many wild thoughts were in his head, and one of them he

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expressed as bluntly and with as little regard for Jesse's feelings as was his habit.

"He'd be pleased to see a girl like you in his house. You were civil enough, I'll be bound. Ay, play your cards wisely, and you may marry him—the man that is to be my master. Now, get you into the house and give me my breakfast. There's been fool talk enough. I'll hear no more of it." He held the gate open and she passed through, setting her bare feet flatly upon the gravel path, and holding herself with all the dignity Jesse Fearney could command.

"You would like Mr. Canning's manners, father; he is a gentleman," she said, and with that for a parting shot she entered the house and began to busy herself about the breakfast table. Here she was clever enough, and although all housework was distasteful to her, she did it in a way that satisfied even so churlish a critic as Japhon Fearney. His mood softened as he sat at the lavish board. He began to talk about the Englishman quite affably.

"He came over with the tide last night, I'll be expecting. They tell me 'tis to see he has bought no pig in a poke. We'll have the laugh of him there, Jesse, for it be a hunard to one that such a man will know nothing of the charter. Let him overstep it a foot, and I'll have the law on him.

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None but a fool would have sent such a message to Japhon Fearney, and as I shall tell him. Now, do you care to give him no right to be uncivil to either of us——”

“I, father! What business is it of mine?”

“A pretty woman is every lone man’s business. They tell me he has no wife.”

“Are you wishing that I should marry him?”

“I’m wishing that you shall help me to keep him in his place. ’Tis he or I henceforth, and the best-witted one at the top. Now, you do your duty by me, and we’ll show what the Fearneys are made of. There’s not another man between here and Exeter, I do believe, who’d send me such a message. Bide a bit, and I’ll know how to answer it.”

Jesse heard him out, and then smiled at such delightful innuendo. How little her father understood her or her sex; how vague were his own thoughts. Jesse smiled in spite of herself.

“Then I am to take your answer, father? Is that what you mean? Is that my part.”

He frowned at her over a capacious plate heavily loaded with beef and potatoes.

“You are to do what every clever girl knows how to do when she has a mind to humble a man’s pride. If you’re in doubt, I’ll show you the way—the first time I meet the man.”

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"Then you'll have to begin now, father, for here is Mr. Canning at the door."

It was a regular bombshell. The old farmer had a mighty napkin tucked about his chin, but he forgot its existence when he stood up hurriedly and peered out of the window at the stranger. There, surely, was the Englishman riding the old chestnut horse that used to carry Edmund Morency about the island, and there was a second stranger upon the "knotty" brown cob, who used to be the pet of Morency's daughters. What a thing to happen! That the man should pay his first visit at such an hour.

"Do you run up and straighten yourself a bit, girl. Keep those naked feet of yours out of the way. I'll be going out to have a clack with him. Leave us a bit until I have had my way!"

He waved her off with his hand, and throwing the napkin aside, took up his coat and went quickly toward the gate. John Canning was still fumbling with the latch as he came up, and so the two faced each other across the whitened railings. A greater contrast could not have been imagined—the farmer and the financier, the man of the downs, the man of cities—yet both sprung from a rural stock, and neither willing to boast an ancestry.

"Good morning. You are Japhon Fearney, the magistrate, I believe?"

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"That's so, and you are Mr. Canning from the Castle. Well, I'm glad to see ye. Walk in, please, sir, and bring this gentleman with you.

He opened the gate, and the two men entered. The rustic's civility claimed Japhon Fearney in that moment. All his courage melted like snow before the soft, warm wind of manner and authority. Besides, he knew that he would be afraid of the Englishman.

"We'll go in the parlor, sir," he said as they entered; "nobody will pry upon us there—though, for that matter, I do hear that you have met my daughter already?"

Canning smiled.

"Please say that your daughter met me—and add that I was very glad to see her."

"Ay; but she always had the run of the old house in the Morencys' time, and no one was there to tell her you had come ashore."

"Although it would seem a great many people were aware of my intention. That's what brings me here this morning so early. I return to Dover directly, and do not propose to settle at the old house for some week or two yet. When I do return, I hope there will be no beacons at the Spanish cove. You will make it your business to see that there are not."

"I don't understand you. My business?"

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"Certainly, your business. You are a magistrate, and the proper person. Surely you are not unaware of what took place last night? If you are, I must enlighten you."

Japhon Fearney had rarely been addressed in this way, and for a moment his natural pugnacity and assertive self-will failed him. None the less he strove gallantly to put a good case forward.

"They do tell me that a beacon was kindled in the cove. 'Twould be some of the boys larking, I suppose. If there's any law against that, 'tis at your command, Mr. Canning—though I must say it would be a poor thing to come among us with a lawyer's brief in your hand. Much better ask the old folk to flog their lads."

"I'll do it—and to begin with the old seaman, Abe Benson. Now, who's to flog him, Mr. Fearney?"

They all laughed heartily, Canning and Hobby in spite of themselves, the old man to cover his confusion.

"Why, surely," he cried, "old Abe be sixty if he's a day. A precious bad son he have, too."

"Would that be Frank, or the lad they call Irwin?"

"Oh, Frank's well enough, though a head for poetry isn't going to cut much corn come August. The other's the trouble. But for me and Abe, he'd

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have been in prison last Candlemas. A bad sort of a boy, Mr. Canning, believe me."

"Then I must make him better. I must help them all, Mr. Fearney. There's a great deal to be done for this place, and I am the man to do it."

"That's what young Morency always said, until I showed him the charter. 'Don't you talk about such things to me,' I said, 'for there's the law to be spoken of first of all.' The lawyers will have shown you the charter, sir—they'd hardly do as badly by you as to keep it from you."

Canning looked at the old fellow shrewdly. He had heard of this wonderful charter—even then in the hands of a famous King's Counsel in London, but hitherto he had paid no attention to it. Now, however, he understood.

"Well," he said, "I have seen the document you speak of, though its value is not clear to me. Of course I shan't try to cram gold and silver into these people's hands if they're asking for copper. In any case they must begin by behaving themselves, and if you cannot persuade them to do that, I must communicate with the police at Bideford. There is to be no more nonsense, Mr. Fearney. I am master here for the future, and I will have obedience"

"To be sure—I have heard talk like that before. Young Morency was just as wild about it, until we

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gave him a lesson or two. You'll find a troublesome lot of lads, sir, and they won't take to the whip kindly. So much I say as a magistrate, who is going to do his duty as between rich and poor, and to do it fearlessly. You mustn't talk to me of masters or servants—I know none but the King's subjects."

"Who, it appears, are engaged just now in trying to put the King's ships on the rocks."

"The King's ships! That's news to me. What King's ship comes to Bell Island?"

"Ask the commander of the cruiser *Marathon*, and he will answer you. I shall make my own report. I wish I could say something of your diligence in the matter, but that appears to be impossible. The Admiralty will hardly be content with your floggings, Mr. Fearney. They will want to know what your constable is doing."

"I shall tell them, sir. To be sure I have done myself less than justice in this matter, and must ask your patience. It shall not occur again, Mr. Canning—I give you my word upon that. Had I known anything of it——"

"Oh, but they say you put them up to it. It's common talk everywhere."

"Then they lie—I'll answer them to their faces, they lie."

The old man was thoroughly alarmed by this time, and his quivering lips and distended nostrils

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plainly betrayed his fear. A shrewd judge of men, Canning watched him closely and determined that the lesson was sufficient. He did not wish to make Japhon Fearney his enemy.

"I am very glad to hear it," he said, "and of course I shall tell the admiral. These people are really most untruthful, and an example should be made of some of them. I leave it to you, Mr. Fearney—my business takes me to England, and it will be some days before I return. Will you promise me an easy passage next time—at least a safe anchorage?"

"Most surely I will. And thank you, sir. It will be a kindness to write to the admiral. I've been a magistrate here now nigh thirty years——"

"And do not wish to see another in your place. I quite understand you—you may rely upon me."

He offered his hand, and the old man shook it heartily. The instinct of self-preservation sent him to the gates with his guests, and he stood there in an attitude of civility while they crossed the down and descended the cliff road to the harbor. Then with bent head he returned to the house to meet Jesse in the porch, and to understand wholly what this day of humiliation meant to him.

For Jesse had changed her dress while he had been entertaining the Englishman, and she now wore a pretty gown of white muslin, and, *mirabile*

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dictu, had drawn stockings of fine silk over her untamed ankles—a spectacle which moved the old man to an expression of anger defying all reason.

“Is it for such as yon you bring out your finery?” he cried—and then, quivering with rage and humiliation and shaking his stick at her, he shouted—“Take them off, you hussy. Get out of my sight before I do you an injury.”

She obeyed him meekly—but not as a daughter. The spoken word could never be recalled, nor would she forget the insult, whatever might be the atonement.

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CHAPTER XII.

JAPHON FEARNEY ASKS A QUESTION.

A DAY of mist and rain followed upon the morning of John Canning's departure for the mainland. It was five o'clock of the afternoon before the weather cleared at all, or as much as a ray of sunshine fell upon Bell Island. Shortly after that hour, however, the clouds broke in the west to disclose the pale gold of the sinking sun and the shimmering waves of a placid sea. Hardly a breath of air stirred in that heavy atmosphere. The fishing boats, driven out of the harbor by giant sweeps, lay rolling to the swell as they waited for the wind. The great steamers left dense smoke clouds behind them as they steamed west or east, for home or the Atlantic.

Old Japhon Fearney did not leave the farm until the clock had struck six. He had not seen Jesse after the violent outbreak of the early morning, nor did he wish for an interview with her. A vain obstinacy still clung to false themes of justification. He accused her in his heart of disloyalty toward himself and the people of the island—but

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chiefly toward himself. Had she not dressed up to please the Englishman who crossed the channel with a whip in his hand? Were not her preferences already declared in the scorn with which she had received his just rebuke? And all this against her own father, to whom she owed her very title to rule over this primitive community. An ancient platitude reminded him of the fables concerning woman's ingratitude—he swore that he would remember them henceforth.

So here was this proud old man, angered and humiliated, setting off from the farm about six o'clock of the evening, and making his way quickly toward the northern cove and the sea. His own sailing boats were not housed in the old harbor, but in a little creek of the sea which looked straight up the Bristol Channel, and had water enough for a ten-ton yacht at all the tides. The cove itself lay distant two miles from the ancient port and the fishermen's cottages, and rarely did any of the people betake themselves there. Japhon Fearney believed himself to be quite alone when he began to descend the narrow wooden stairway which led to the beach, and he was both surprised and chagrined to discover Irwin Benson, old Abe's second son, at the ladder's foot, and to hear the "Good night" with which the lad would have left him.

Now this youth was a notorious scamp, though

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liked well enough by the people, as scamps sometimes are. A sheepish, good-looking, idle boy, with wonderfully expressive eyes, he had never had any education to speak of—and while he refused, when he could, to take his place in his father's boat, he avoided as cleverly any laborious occupations on land. None knew him better than Japhon Fearney; none had spoken so plainly to him or put him more often to public shame. And now were these two face to face at a critical moment in the island story, and it came to the shrewd old magistrate that Irwin Benson had been the informer, and that from his lips John Canning heard the story of the beacon and the names of those who had kindled it.

"Come you here," he cried sharply—and the boy came, creeping softly over the yellow sand and smiling at every step. For a little while they stood face to face, Japhon's rugged brows expressing many emotions, the lad's face inscrutable and unchanging.

"What did you tell the Englishman last night? I'll have no lies. What did you say to him?"

"I didn't see him, Mr. Fearney. Why do you ask me?"

"You're a liar, and you know it. You were out with Tom Weede's daughter, and you didn't quit the cottage until after eleven. Where did you go then?"

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"To my bed—where else? You ask my father."

"I asked him—d'ye hear that? He says it was one o'clock before you came home."

A flush passed across the pale face as the words were spoken, but there was no other evidence of discovery. Irwin Benson believed himself to be Japhon Fearney's master, but he had not the words to express his claim.

"Oh, lots of people are out after twelve o'clock at night," he rejoined, with gathering impudence—"you're one of them, Mr. Fearney. I've often seen your boat coming in at two or three of the morning. Why shouldn't I be out if I wish?"

Japhon's eyes blazed with fury.

"What are my comings and goings to you, lad? Answer me that."

"Nothing whatever, Mr. Fearney—but you might think a little better of me than to suppose I'd tell the Englishman."

Japhon strode forward a step, and seized the youth by the collar.

"What are my comings and goings to you?" he repeated; "why do you watch me, lad?"

"Why, I don't watch you; but I can't help seeing things. Jo and me talk about it sometimes, but we don't think nothing——"

He halted, amazed at the anger of the twitching face which now confronted him. Japhon Fearney

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might have been possessed of a devil as he uttered a loud and almost inhuman cry, and began to beat the lad furiously. Again and again his heavy stick fell upon the helpless shoulders of the pale and shrinking youth. Gulls went whirling away at the unaccustomed sounds—even the fishermen at sea heard the doleful cries, and spoke of them upon their return. But it was Jo March, Japhon's boatman, who intervened at last, coming up at a run from the creek and imploring his master to desist.

"Oh, sir, sir, for God's sake, have done! What will the people say?"

Japhon took a step backward; his hands were quivering, there was froth upon his lips.

"I'll teach you to play the spy on me," he cried. "Now, go and tell your father what I've done. Say it was for telling lies to the Englishman. He'll give you another dose, and rightly, too. Now be off with yourself before I do you an injury."

Irwin Benson scrambled to his feet, and went off at a loping trot, not unlike that of a wild animal. The pain he suffered was considerable, but fear the greater incentive, and he did not cease to run until he had gained the shelter of that copse of plane trees which hides the farm from the observation of the village. Here he lay panting like a dog, and quivering with passion. What a fool he had been to speak at all! What a madman to declare himself

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so prematurely! He knew that it was all an idle tale—the bravado of suspicion which investigation might humble. And all he had got for his pains was these cuts and bruises which hurt him intolerably, and would leave their mark for many a day.

Custom had made for Irwin Benson a second home of this little wood. Here he dreamed through the sunny hours; here he lay huddled when the winter blasts drove him to shelter. The black story which the village told of Nance Weede and her wrongs had its beginnings in this sheltered copse which the islanders despised. And now, at eventide, the girl Nance came up to the place, as was her habit, and espied Irwin lying there. No longer did she expect him to receive her with burning words of love and reckless kisses; but when she found him weeping, her woman's heart went out to him, and she stooped and kissed.

“Why, Irwin dear, whatever is the matter with you?”

“Don't you mess me about; you go home to your father and tell him that Japhon Fearney wants the law of him.”

“Is it about last night, Irwin? I knew there'd be trouble about that. What's he been saying to you, Irwin? Has he struck you?”

“Oh, he and I will have that out. Do you go and tell your father as Japhon Fearney will have

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the law on all of us, if I don't have it on him first, for what we did at the Spanish Rock. I'll mind my own business—and let him look out when I've finished it."

"Don't you want me to stop with you to-night, Irwin dear? There's long nights now since you and me were out together."

"I tell you no. Go to your father, and repeat what I say. Do you want us all in prison? You're a wonder to talk, Nance, but if it comes to doing me a good turn, there isn't any one slower on the island. Do you think I'm in the mood for foolery to-night? I tell you he's half killed me, and I'll have the law on him yet—by God, I will!"

He turned on his face and began to cry like a child. The girl stood sadly at the wood's edge, gazing out to sea where she could discern the white hull of Japhon Fearney's boat. Then she set off for the village with slow steps.

How joyfully had she come to this place in the old time! How much had God willed that she must suffer because of it!

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CHAPTER XIII

A RENDEZVOUS UPON THE MAINLAND AND AFTER- WARD

A DANK breeze began to blow from west by north about eight o'clock of the evening, and helped Japhon to make a good passage to Barnstaple Bay. He was an accomplished seaman, and the master not only of the half-decked boat, the *Pharos*, but of a couple of fishing smacks which carried his produce to the mainland and brought out necessary merchandise in return.

Few ships were better known than these in the Bristol Channel, or excited less remark. If people talked at all, it was about the parsimonious habits of the old fellow, who made so many voyages by night that he might not lose a moment of the working day. "There be old Japhon of the *Pharos*," they would say, and add—"Ay, truts 'ee to be up to zummat when other volks be asleep." As to the excisemen, they had given up Japhon long ago. Though Bell Island was a free port by an ancient charter dating from the first of the Charleses, neither its people nor its privileges gave the Customs any

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trouble. Certainly old Japhon himself would have as soon thought of trying to smuggle brandy or cigars into Barnstaple as of dancing a hornpipe on the river quay. A fine, grave, law-abiding old fellow—who would suspect him?

So his voyages excited little interest. It is true that he was always invited to make a declaration when he landed, and that his cargoes of produce were subjected to the necessary scrutiny—but beyond this none asked him questions or were curious at his coming and going. A man of substance, the people said, who had frequent dealings with Jape, Angus & Snarth, the merchants of Barnstaple. They envied him the freedom of his life, for in their eyes he was the true master of Bell Island; and when the property was sold, surprise attended the fact that he had not bought it. Now for the first time came the suspicion that Japhon Fearney was not as rich as the people had supposed. "The old 'un have put a tidy bit away," the expression used to be—but now they added—"I'll warrant 'ee don't do better with the land than others who have gone before him."

Japhon, we say, was an accomplished seaman, and he was rarely accompanied by more than two hands when he crossed to Barnstaple or Bideford. One of these would be the nigger Jo; the other was a Swede, by name Isaacson, a hardy, clever youth,

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who had few words of English, and did not often find the occasion to employ them. These two would keep to the boat while their master went up to the merchant's offices or to the inns where other farmers of his acquaintance were staying. He forbade them to go on shore under pain of dismissal, and was never disobeyed. Indeed, his habits of secrecy might have provoked more general remark had they not been attributed to those miserly habits which resented the friendship of men because of the demands it might make upon his hospitality. "Old Japhon Fearney be gone up to the Hunted Stag," they would say; "but 'tis not to ask any one to take a drink with 'ee, I'll be bound." And this was true—for his visits were for another purpose altogether.

Japhon landed in Barnstaple at a late hour upon this particular occasion, and went openly to the offices of Jape, Angus & Snarth. To the excisemen he was unusually communicative, telling of the Englishman's visit to Bell Island and of the trick they had played upon him. "But," he added sagaciously, "others might keep their eyes open in that direction, for what does such a man with such a house?" When the question had provoked the proper nods of doubt and affirmation, and the old man had declared that he came ashore "empty," he went straight on from the river quay to the merchants' offices in Cross Street. Here, although it

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was nearly ten o'clock, he found Mr. Angus, the only surviving partner of the firm, awaiting him with some expectancy; and the two men having entered the parlor at the back of the offices, and the servant being sent to bed, they entered at once into an animated conversation which had little to do with merchandise and a great deal with prudence.

Holly Angus was a slim, red-haired young man of thirty years of age. He wore his hair brushed high upon his forehead, and was so exceedingly particular about his dress that even his friends regarded it as no fit subject for a jest. To-night he wore a smoking suit in a dark shade of blue, and had added the adornment of a crimson rose for his buttonhole. His manner was offhand and a little absent—the manner of one who listened to his companion but thought of something else.

"Well!" he exclaimed, as he pushed a chair forward; "so you came after all?"

Japhon sat down slowly and put his hat on the table.

"I thought it better to come," he rejoined; "there's a lot of talk over yonder, and you should hear it."

"Talk of John Canning, I suppose. There naturally would be. Does it concern us in any way?"

"Not at present; it may do by and by. I sighted the yacht in the offing, but did not speak her. By

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all talk, these are the days to let her go by—but you'll be the best judge of that?"

He leaned back in his chair, watching the other curiously. Holly Angus had learned his business in London, and Japhon credited him, on that account, with unnatural shrewdness. Indeed, had it been otherwise, he would not have done business with him at all. And to-night he relied altogether upon his acumen.

"What talk do you refer to?" asked Angus slowly. "Something that I have not heard?"

"You must have heard it. They know in London that this stuff is coming through some western port, and western ports are where they're seekin' it. We'd be fools not to lie low a while. If you've a fancy for the inside of a jail, I haven't. My tastes are different."

Holly Angus smiled a slow, soft smile of pity, not unmingled with contempt.

"You are repeating what I said to you ten days ago," he remarked; "well, I'm glad to see that you remembered it. Now I'll tell you something more. The report was true enough—every word of it. But it's ancient history by this time."

"Then they have taken the specials off?"

"They are watching South Wales and the new harbor works at Fishguard. This place told them nothing. They sent a written account of every

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skipper who trades in and out and gave his history. You were among the number—magistrate, and a minister of religion. I hope you like that, Fearney—a minister of religion.”

He laughed heartily, lolling back in his chair to watch a smile of annoyance steal over the old man’s face, as a flush of dirty water upon an old brown stone. When they had enjoyed their own thoughts for some minutes, Angus stretched out his hand and drew a tray of glasses across to him.

“Come,” he said, “I like prudence, but prudence may sit in the cold while pluck is warming itself at the fire. Let’s drink to luck. You say the yacht is in the offing—well, speak her as you go home. I’ll answer for your safety. You know how many times I’ve answered for it—did I ever play you false?”

“You never did,” cried Japhon emphatically.

“Then you may believe me to-night. Speak the yacht, and take the parcel. You can land it on Tuesday, when you bring in the hay for Fethermore. Let it be on the fifteenth bundle to come ashore. What’s to forbid you?—unless you’ve taken the fancy to turn your back on good money? But I’ll answer that you haven’t, and the stuff will come ashore. It wouldn’t be Japhon Fearney to send it back to Holland.”

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The old man liked the compliment, and drained a glass to it.

"You'll have your way, as you always do," he said; "well, sink or swim, I'll run it this time. What's to come afterward will be as time makes wise. If this Englishman turns curious, we'll knock off a while. He's a big, masterful sort of man, and not the one to be trifled with. I'll have to watch him closely."

"For what? What does he know about us? Really, Fearney, you annoy me sometimes. Whatever has a convict to do with Japhon Fearney and the house of Jape, Angus & Snarth?"

"A convict! You're joking?"

"I was never farther from a joke in my life. The man has just served seven years' penal servitude for defrauding the shareholders of a public company. You ought to know it. I am surprised at you."

Japhon licked his lips for quite a long time. This was his habit when he heard something very much to his liking—as though he were turning the exclamation of pleasure over and over upon his tongue and afraid to part with it. Presently, however, he began to laugh, and continued to do so in little outbursts, which he tried vainly to control.

"Repeat that again!" he exclaimed presently; "a convict, the man that's taken the Castle! You tell me he's a convict!"

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"Certainly I do. I'll send you the papers. There's no doubt about it."

"Who did seven years' penal servitude?"

"That was his sentence. They speak of him as an exemplary prisoner."

"He would be! And that was the man who had the impudence to come hectoring me this very mornin'. Well, Mr. Angus, I shall have something to say to him next time, be sure of it. I shall find my tongue."

"But I wouldn't let it run away with me, Fearney. Don't arouse curiosity."

"Oh, trust me, trust me, I'll keep him in his place. A convict! You do amaze me."

He repeated it with the monotonous reiteration of a man who has won a great personal triumph; and when he left Holly Angus a quarter of an hour later, he could think of nothing else. The man a convict. This masterful, overbearing lord of Bell Island just no better than a thief or a housebreaker. It amazed him. And he had been thinking that Jesse might marry the fellow and rule up at the great house. Ay, lucky he learned the news in time. His triumph must be inevitable. Nothing could forbid it.

And so he made his way down to the river, and the tide serving and the men being awakened, he put out to sea again and presently discerned the

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flashing light of Bell Island and the stars which marked the fishermen's cottages, a little to the northward. There the chapel stood—therein he had preached last Sunday from the text "Judge not that ye be not judged." Japhon Fearney remembered that as he watched the lights.

"Judge not that ye be not judged." Was it the word of God or man's desire which chose such a text for him? He was afraid to answer the question. He preferred to think of other things.

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CHAPTER XIV

THE COWARD MAKES AN EFFORT

IRWIN BENSON lay in the thicket until it was full dark, and then he crept down to the shore. It was no uncommon thing for him to put to sea in one of his father's boats, but he rarely ventured at night, or when there was more than a ripple on the water. This night, however, a spirit foreign to his nature helped him. He cared nothing for the blackness of the sky or the promise of tempest, but choosing an ancient boat with a single lug sail, he rowed himself out of the harbor and set a course as though he also were bound for England.

Here was an odd character, and one difficult to comprehend. Few understood the boy or took heed of his life. All the favors of his father's poor house had been reserved for the disappointing Frank. Let a stranger speak of the family, and Frank would be thrown at him; the people said—Frank who had been to school in Devon, Frank who had spent a year in London, Frank who wrote pieces in the papers. But of Irwin, not a word.

He had resented the indifference, and shaped his

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character upon it. When he sinned, he told himself that he could not help it. A further argument suggested that sin was a subtle vengeance upon his enemies. He had been starved and beaten and neglected at home? What right had they to ask good conduct of him? And yet, oddly enough, there was mixed up with all this a strange mysticism which spoke ecstatically of heavenly things, and sensually of those pertaining to the earth. He adored women, but had no conscience toward them. The Sabbath found him bitterly repenting his deeds, but without the moral strength to promise amendment.

This was the lad who had put to sea after Japhon Fearney had beaten him, and dared the darkness because of his evil thoughts. A very cunning nature, fed by many suspicions, led him to espionage and surmise, and now at last to this voyage upon an unknown course. Whither was he going, and why? Perchance he did not know himself, and believing no more than that the sea had her secrets, he set his course toward England and waited for Fearney's return.

To be sure, there was nothing to make him afraid—nothing, that is to say, at the beginning of it. The clouded heaven gave a black sea below, but showed very clearly the lights of the passing ships and those on the shore. A monitive silence prevailed, and even the wavelets rippled softly as

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though upon an oily bed. Far out in the Channel, Irwin distinguished the brilliant lights of some big ship bound for Avonmouth, and again to the south, the masthead light of the cruiser which had been anchored off Bell Island for some days. As to the fishing fleet, that had disappeared in the direction of Longships light, and would be no more heard of until morning. Irwin cared nothing about discovery, and yet he was glad to be alone. He could almost imagine that he escaped from the living world, and was drifting to some new land where a miracle would open his eyes to the glories of an unknown sphere.

He was not a clever sailor, but he knew enough of the currents about Bell Island to set a course straight out to sea, and to keep his little boat far from the dangerous reefs which run to the southward. A sluggish breeze, beginning to blow about eleven o'clock, found him some three miles from the harbor and seven from the coast of Devon. He could discern the lights upon the mainland quite plainly, but no lanterns of ships anywhere about him. Thus it befell that something like terror overtook him, when a black, silent shape loomed suddenly out of the darkness and passed so close to him that his outstretched hand could have touched it. A ship, he said—yes, steamship—but without lanterns, steaming so slowly that she almost drifted.

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Had she come three yards more to port, that would have been an end of Irwin Benson. He shivered at his narrow escape, and lay for some time peering into the darkness as though a second monster might follow and destroy him.

It is not strange, perhaps, that this sudden apparition was not accompanied by any definite ideas, or that he failed to associate it with Japhon's voyage. A vague knowledge of Admiralty and the fact that manœuvres were taking place in the Channel led him to say that this would be a "destroyer," and that she carried no lights because of the mimic warfare. Her return, suddenly, and without any warning, confirmed that impression. She passed at a cable's length this time, and was headed southward. Irwin had just determined that she must be a destroyer, when she showed a single green light, not on her starboard, but on her port quarter; and lifting it half way to the masthead, dropped it as quickly. Irwin knew much which it is necessary for sailors to know, but of the Navy or its customs he knew nothing. The "destroyer" must be making a signal—but to whom? When he answered the question, it was to tell himself that another ship had hoisted a green lantern in reply, and that she was standing out from the mainland and sailed, as it would appear, right in the "destroyer's" path.

All this fascinated the lad, and led him to forget

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both Japhon Fearney and his own suspicions. For a long while he lay, his boat swinging lazily to the gentle seas, and the hauled lug sail flapping softly against the little mast. Perchance he would have returned eventually to the islands as wise as he left it but for a sudden lift of the clouds, which declared the scene plainly enough. Yes, there the strange steamer was, and there now, fifty yards from her, lay the boat which had put out from Barnstaple Bay. But that was Japhon Fearney's boat. Irwin would have recognized it anywhere. Nor was that all, for he himself was detected as quickly, and with a low whistle from one boat to the other, the strange steamer instantly showed all her proper lights, while Prisoner—Twenty-Seven

Fearney headed straight for Bell Island and the harbor.

Now, it has been said that Irwin Benson was a lad of much natural shrewdness, and yet it must be granted that he could make nothing of this circumstance. He had heard, no matter where, wild stories of old Japhon's dealings with strange ships at sea, and had determined to probe them for himself—yet why the old man should so act, or what such conduct meant, he had not the vaguest idea. Certainly this would be no excise affair; trust Japhon not to be risking his position and his money in a paltry attempt to smuggle a keg or two of

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brandy or a few cigars into England. Then why did he speak the ships at all, and why did this particular ship carry no lanterns? Full of wonder, the lad headed his lugger for the shore. Then fear—fear unlike any he had ever known—overtook him when he perceived that Japhon's boat was coming after him, and that it must overhaul him before he could make the harbor.

What a fool he had been! And what a hazardous thing to do!—for surely this would be no affair of a common rebuke or even of a thrashing. He dreaded Fearney now with a dread unspeakable. His own helpless situation, the lonely sea, the darkness of the night all contributed to his alarms. Would not this man kill him? Strange tales were told upon Bell Island of Japhon's anger, of what it had been and of what it had done. Irwin remembered how the old man's eyes had blazed at the mere question—and now he knew, knew that he had been followed, perhaps imagined that he had been discovered. Crouching in the boat, Irwin turned sick with terror. Yes, they would kill him because of what he knew. And the irony was that he knew nothing.

There had been some lifting of the clouds when he discovered the ships, and this endured for a quarter of an hour perhaps. A great azure lake in a heaven of black mountains sent down a pale glow

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upon the sea, and revealed all things in contrasts of silver and of sepia. But for the wind, which was but a breath across the waste, Irwin Benson would have come to judgment quickly enough; but the lugger could hold the ketch in such a sea, and drift with her to no disadvantage. Thus for twenty minutes the positions were unchanged. Thus the race became but a whisper of prayer—upon the lad's part that he might make the haven; upon the man's that he might forestall the lugger. Never, in all truth, had Irwin known what the fear of death could be until this black night overtook him. For it was not discovery but the pain which must attend discovery, not the dread of the aftermath but of the present, of the cold, dark water, of the rough hands which would hold him down, of the seas closing above his head and the unknown terrors beneath. And all this vainly, mere surmise; the vision of an hysterical youth who had not the courage of his deeds.

He prayed for safety and thanked God aloud when the clouds banked up in the heavens and night fell back again. Now for a long while it was a battle of the ears, the lad listening for any message from the waves, the man for the boat's voice leading him. For an hour, a fresher breeze helping them, the two sailed round and about each other. But the lugger was the first to harbor; and, scram-

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bling ashore, Irwin ran like a deer to his father's house.

Day was breaking in the sky then and the island asleep. He crept unto his bed and laughed, as much from the reaction of terror as at his own victory.

Let Japhon Fearney charge him to-morrow.

Ay, but would he dare? Would he dare?

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CHAPTER XV

THE FAIR AT THE CASTLE

JOHN CANNING looked down from the terrace of the Castle to the garden scene below; but it would be untrue to say that he found pleasure in it. Was it for this that he had bought the place and sought its sanctuary—to hire fiddlers for the feet of hobble-dehoys, to set up his tents that the vulgar might eat and drink therein? He knew that it was not, but submitted patiently, nevertheless, to the ordeal. After all, he owed something to so good a friend as Ernest Hobby, and the fair at the Castle had been Hobby's idea from the beginning.

"Get in touch with the people," Hobby had said; "you complain that they are uncivil, that they receive you coldly. Well, you don't know them yet. Of course they are jealous of their supposed rights and will oppose you. Obstinacy is the peasant's compensation for wit and learning. They don't like you for many reasons, but chiefly because you are a stranger. Get to know them, Canning. Make yourself master of their good will, and then you will be the 'laird' indeed."

Canning listened a little contemptuously. To be

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sure, he had been but two months on Bell Island—this was the month of September—and the place had already disappointed him. What a lot of pig-headed, obstinate fools the people were—prating of their rights perpetually, or quoting the charter until he was weary of the very word! All attempts to improve their condition had failed dismally hitherto. They wanted nothing better than it had been. When he spoke of building a fine church whose spire should be seen from the mainland, they retorted with a talk of covenants and justification by grace which exasperated him. The reading-room he had wished to open, the club he would have founded, did no more than provoke their suspicion. Not a man but young Frank Benson entered its doors, and he but to read the daily papers and to idle away the time. Finally had come the proposal for a new harbor, and an immediate resort to the bitterest weapons of outspoken hostility. They would have no harbor to bring the coasting barks to Bell Island and ruin them. Such a suggestion savored of robbery.

So here was the beginning of a pretty mischief, and here a simple fellow's solution of it. Hobby was all for conciliation—the *festina lente*, the compromise. Canning, in his impulsive way, had not hastened slowly enough, he said. It would be necessary to go step by step. To which Canning an-

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swered with the question, Why go at all? Why remember the existence of such cattle?

"I came to this place to find solitude," he said; "I have found instead a colony of very detestable people, overmuch given to drink and other vices and imbued with few virtues. If I choose, I can make their lives miserable——"

"We can all do that, Canning, where the poor are concerned. But it isn't quite a noble performance, is it? Don't blame them for not being what they can never be. You wouldn't call a dog names for not being an ox."

"Then what, in Heaven's name, would you do, Hobby?"

"Feed them, my dear boy. Give them meat and drink. Show them something a bit brighter than anything they find in their daily lives. That's what I would do."

"Oh, a fancy fair and fête-bribery and corruption in a gross form. I believe you wish to dance with the village girls yourself. Now, isn't it that, Hobby?"

Hobby blushed very much, but declared that it wasn't. His simple arguments won the day in the end, and Canning consented to see those obstinate folk and to hear them for themselves.

"Do what you like," he had said; "I'll pay the bill cheerfully. If it must be beef and beer, for

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Heaven's sake let them have plenty of it. I'm sick of them, Hobby——”

“But very much in love with Bell Island all the same. Well, I'm glad you came here, Canning, for you'd never have been happy over yonder. And when a man does make a home and learns to love it, he's about as near to happiness as any of us ever will be in this mortal life.”

Canning had no argument with which to meet this, nor did he try to do so. It was true that he had learned already to love Bell Island; true that he had found upon its heights the peace he had sought vainly through the years. Here no man knew his story, or, knowing it, might profit by it. Here was a haven to which he might retire while preparing the armies of his brain for the new assault upon the citadels of wealth. For, be sure, such a man as John Canning had no intention of retiring definitely from the world in which he had won so many triumphs and suffered so much bitterness. He would go forth to conquer—when the day came.

Meanwhile there was, upon this sunny day of September, the fair in the gardens of his house, and the realization of that scheme by which his simple-minded friend set so much store. Already four fiddlers had arrived from Bideford, and according to the customs of fiddlers in those parts, had taken off their coats and hung them up in the boughs of

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the trees. The gardens themselves looked very beautiful, and had gained something by the cool white tents, pegged down upon the sunburned lawns. As for the flowers, and especially the great dahlias upon which Canning prided himself, they made a very picture for the eye, marred only by the presence of stote caterers from Bideford, who rolled monstrous barrels of beer to the refreshment tents, and handled rounds of beef which should have fed an army.

It was to be an island fête and yet more than that, for friends from the mainland were to be invited, and every lad to bring his lass. These came straggling up to the Castle about four of the afternoon, the girls aglow with blushes and colored ribbons, the sheepish youths following after with lagging, but not unwilling, steps. As for the old people, they came a-tiptoe as though they would declare their readiness for the dance to all and sundry—and, as Abe Benson announced, “jine in a jig so long as it were de-chorus.” This worthy wore a seaman’s coat, with smart brass buttons and anchors stamped upon them. But his son Frank came in a pepper and salt suit from Barnstaple, and moved apart as though really a little ashamed of his company.

“We are a very primitive people,” he explained to Canning loftily; “few of us have had any educa-

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tional advantages. I am greatly amused sometimes—but it is also a little pathetic.”

“What is pathetic?” was the rejoinder.

“Oh, I mean their ignorance. Some of them hardly know whether the world is round or flat.”

“Especially on Saturday nights, I suppose. Well, my boy, you should be their schoolmaster. Why don’t you take pity on them?”

“Oh, I am going to the law, when I have finished my reading. I’m not in the teaching line.”

He was much affronted, and strolled away to wait for Jesse. The others in the meantime advanced as well-drilled soldiers to the refreshment tent, and immediately made themselves comfortable therein.

“I be such a man for a corner seat that I fall into it to the manner born,” old Abe said, as he took his second mug of beer; “but this I will say, friends, we are guests in this house and must be upon the proprieties. Now let me see any man forgetting what’s due to Bell Island, and I’ll d—n well lay my stick on his back.”

Somebody said “Ay, ay,” to that; but an overbold fellow in the corner muttered something about Abe Benson being as ready as any other man to take a wench on his knee, and this raised an ironical controversy which nothing but John Canning’s entry among them could terminate.

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The master of Bell Island certainly looked very well that day in his gray frock suit and white top-hat, and he moved with that firm step and gracious manner which the years had made habitual to him. To the people his greeting was both affable and cheering. He was very glad to see them in his house, hoped that they would make themselves at home and do just as they liked. Observing Irwin Benson in a corner, and remembering that the lad had been called a scamp, he beckoned him to his side and asked him why he was not dancing. To which the youth answered sheepishly, and with some hypocrisy, that Nance Weede had not yet arrived, and that it would not be seemly for him to be dancing with any other. When Canning asked the further question, if the ladies in those parts imitated their sisters on the mainland and generally kept the gentlemen waiting, the response was both quick and opportune.

"They tell me they're just the same all the world over, sir. I wish I knew, but I've never been further than Barnstaple, and that's a poor place to judge them; as Mr. Fearney will tell you. He's often in Barnstaple, generally going over by night when nobody's about. You should ask him about it, sir; though his comings and goings are not what he most likes to talk about."

Canning looked at the lad sharply.

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"He goes by night—ah, his produce would be shipped to Barnstaple. Or is it to Bideford? I am still a stranger in this part of the world."

"He sends everything to Barnstaple, sir, in the two old smacks he bought of Mother Hunning after her husband died. You can see them crossing almost any week, but Mr. Fearney himself, he goes by night in the ketch he calls the *Pharos*. I saw him starting one night, and he was fair angry. But for my father I'd have had him in the courts for what he did to me."

"Mr. Fearney is evidently one who believes in minding his own business. It is a good lesson. Do not pry into other people's affairs, my lad. Your own should occupy all your time. Now go and look for the young lady. What is her name, did you say?"

"Nance Weede, sir; she's over yonder with old Mother Hunning of whom I was speaking. Young Hunning you may have heard of. He's been in prison more than once—there won't be many to dance with him to-day."

Canning took a step backward, just as a man may step away from a wasp which would sting. A flush of color suffused his sun-browned face. For an instant he could have believed that this fawning lad had been chosen as the mouthpiece of an insult.

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"What do you mean, my boy? Why should they not dance with him?"

"I don't know, sir. Father says it's human nature. He's the only one on Bell Island as ever came to a misfortune, and the folks don't like it. We're a proud people, sir, though we're poor."

Here was the common cant of the quay and the meeting house, and Irwin Benson knew it to be such. But he wished to try its effect on the stranger, believing that platitudes which were good enough for Japhon Fearney were good enough for him. Canning, however, turned sharply on his heel and went straight over to Mother Hunning and her son.

And this was the moment when Jesse entered the grounds, and, standing shyly by her father's side, looked about her quickly as though seeking some one and but ill content until she had found him.

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CHAPTER XVI

JESSE REVISITS THE LONG GALLERY

FRANK BENSON was the first to espy her and went over to her side immediately, to utter a commonplace about his own pleasure and to express contempt for that of other people. He wondered a little at the magnificence of old Japhon's appearance, but expressed no surprise. Never had the old man worn so majestic an air. A frock coat from the best tailor in Barnstaple, a glossy silk hat of enormous dimensions, yellow gloves held awkwardly in the hand, a collar which gave him physical pain, were the insignia of an office he felt compelled to glorify upon such an occasion. Had you read his thoughts you would have found them far from the scene and its novelties, for he was thinking of the little chapel in the hollow, and of a sermon he once had preached there from the text "Judge not that ye be not judged."

To be sure there was a further reflection, and that a prudent one. Japhon Fearney knew enough of the law of slander to weigh his words at all times. Had he been sure of Holly Angus' facts he would have gone more confidently, but even that worthy

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was not sure of them. Certainly a man named John Canning had been in prison for fraud—but was this the man? Japhon looked up at the Castle, down at the brilliant gardens, and the doubt waxed stronger. Was this the man? Ay, it would never do to make a mistake about the matter. The law would correct that, and a castigation there meant bankruptcy, or worse, the lawyers.

In which mood of doubt, his easy charity had consented to come to the fair. Vanity also had been tickled by the invitation. Let the two of them, the master of the Castle and the King's justice, stand side by side before the people as their proper lords and rulers. Japhon perceived that Canning might want all the rock for himself. He was determined to get a foothold; and there he stood upon the sweeping lawn, a figure ironical of a petty kingdom, a trussed effigy of an unstable power.

"I don't see Mr. Canning; where is he, Jesse? He should be here to meet us rightly—'tis no proper behavior this, and me a magistrate."

"Mr. Canning is over there, father, talking to young Hunning."

"Ay, I should have looked for him in that quarter. Just you step down and tell him we're here, Frank. I'll cool my heels on no man's doorstep."

Frank exchanged a glance with Jesse as who should say "This is no proper thing to do," but he

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obeyed the old man nevertheless, and presently John Canning himself came briskly across the lawn and greeted these distinguished visitors. With the old man he was particularly affable; asked after his harvest, his boats, the doings in the hamlet, the general state of the island and the people. Nor did he forget to throw in an occasional compliment to Jesse, whose quick eyes read up his shy glances and made no mistake concerning them.

She was smartly dressed to-day, perhaps showily for such a place, but not to the point of vulgarity. Very girlish, slim, her skin amazingly fair, her hair a wealth of black tresses caught up in a bright blue ribbon, her dress of the finest muslin, a wonderful transparency which it would seem the lightest breath might dissolve, her stockings of silk, her shoes buckled and over-fine, mittens upon her arms, a plain gold brooch at her throat. She was neither of the bourgeoisie nor the peasant—but just herself, Jesse of the Pharos decked out for the fête; a schoolgirl grown a little older; a picture that Bellini should have caught upon the Guidecca and passed on to the immortality of galleries. Nor would she have been a woman if she had not guessed at least something of the truth. John Canning should notice her to-day, she had said; she certainly was not disappointed.

He wondered at himself for the sidelong glances

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he could not avert, asked himself why he carried so vague a memory of a famous interview, told himself that she was merely a farmer's daughter—and for all that remained close at her side. Frank Benson, upon his part, was not to be ignored, nor would the old man be left behind; so here was a little procession going from tent to tent among the people, and always bringing hands to honest heads or women to the curtsy. As for old Japhon, he found himself in his glory, and he was very glad that he had listened to Holly Angus with suspicion.

After all it was something to stand cheek by jowl with the great man of the island; something to be able to say, "My friend Canning up at the big house." He hoped very much that the news was not true, and found himself unwilling to give it serious credence. It may even be that he resolved to make no use of it should it be true, but to serve his own interests by the judicious cultivation of one who evidently possessed a large fortune, and was not unwilling to disburse some of it upon Bell Island. In which spirit he followed his leader from tent to tent, and being required by him to do so, gave the signal for the dancing, which many of the young people had been long awaiting.

And what a tripping on the light fantastic followed! How shy the lads were; how ready the girls! There were even silly old men to push their

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way to the green with exclamations upon their aforetime cleverness; tousled old women to stumble a sorry gait and end panting in unwilling arms; but everywhere a great stamping and the utterance of shrill cries and a real response to the crazy music. As for the fiddlers, they had come from Bideford with a big reputation for muscle and powers of endurance, and were not to lose it upon Bell Island. True, one of them, regardless of his part, would halt from time to time to take a great draught out of a monstrous pot, and this was disconcerting—but little the dancers recked of that or cared either for time or tune if they could but shuffle a measure and catch a slim waist in its performance. As for old Abe Benson, he boasted afterward that he had cuddled every girl in the company. “And what else were they dancin’ for?” he asked shrewdly.

Canning was much amused at all this, and far from displeased by its opportunities. He found himself alone with Jesse by and by, and insensibly drew her away from the stadium. If she had the will to dance she concealed it artfully, an itching foot battling with a beating heart and the persuasions of her vanity. Upon the man’s part there was just the echo of boyish triumphs, the pleasure which would lead her from the company of her equals and assert a proper superiority; but he would not have denied the desire to be alone with her, and

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he began to say that he had been very blind when the Long Gallery caged so wild a bird for him.

"Let us see!" he exclaimed; "how many weeks have passed since we met?"

She told him instantly.

"It is just ten weeks since you came to the farm to see my father."

He was gratified that she should have remembered it. A flash of memory in her eyes upbraided her confession.

"And eleven weeks also since you promised me not to forget. But I hope you have forgotten."

"No one has," she rejoined simply; "people on Bell Island never forget. That is sure and certain. They won't like you any the better for having them to your house. They will take what you give them and then go away and laugh at you. That's our character—I know it."

"But not yours; I'll answer for you."

She looked up at him impatiently. The rhodomontade of nonsense always exasperated her.

"What does it matter what I think? The master of the island doesn't want the women's good will, he wants the men's. And you haven't got it, Mr. Canning. There isn't one of them who will say a good word for you when your back is turned."

"Am I not to include your father in the honorable exceptions?"

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"Oh, father is worse than any of them. He says you mean to ruin the people, and they believe him."

"And so they all come here to dance on my lawn?"

"Of course they do; and to tell each other afterward that you were silly to have them."

Canning was greatly tickled. This was exactly the kind of talk he used to encourage in the old days. The girl was revealing her character swiftly. He wondered how much of tenderness and the womanly instinct lay behind this plaster of shrewd wit, and who would be the man to discover it.

"Naturally," he said presently, "I am very much concerned about it. I should, of course, pay some attention to my guests' opinions."

"You pay some," she rejoined, "or you would not have had them here to-day. If you were indifferent, Mr. Canning, not one of us would have passed the Castle gates."

"That's very true. I must tell my friend, Mr. Hobby, that—he gave the party."

She looked at him shyly, some displeasure in her glance.

"I don't believe it," she said quietly; "you thought he was right or you would not have the people here."

"And you blame me for that?"

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"Oh, no, I think you are right. They won't be able to say that you didn't try to please them."

He laughed, with a business man's disdain.

"They may say what they please, my dear young lady—when I have had my own way. That's something I generally get, even if I have to tread on other people's toes to get it. These good folks are merely obstinate. I am trying to find out how to deal with them. When I discover the right way, a great many things will happen on Bell Island—but there may be none of those present here to-day to witness them."

Jesse looked a little afraid at this. She liked his masterfulness, but it awed her. Deeds, but not diplomacy, had prevailed hitherto on Bell Island. She would not have been of the people had not these new methods found her reticent.

"Oh," she said, "I am sure you will do what is wise, and what is just. It is easy to be unjust to simple people, Mr. Canning. You understand that much better than I do."

"But if I am merely just—if I give them their rights and nothing more?"

"Ah, that is what every one says when he does not get all he wants. Our rights, Mr. Canning, are so often other people's wrongs."

"Meaning—— But no, I am not going to preach a sermon, Miss Jesse. Let us talk of something

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else. Do you remember the last morning you climbed the turret stair? It was eleven weeks ago, you say. Let us climb it together now, and see if we find the house changed. My pictures are in the Long Gallery. Will you let me show them to you?"

She assented with a nod, though her color heightened at his invitation. They had come to the house by this time, and, entering by the wicket, found themselves presently in the Long Gallery where Jesse had spent so many hours of dreaming. She would hardly have known the place, she said—such furniture, such cushioned alcoves, great pictures upon the walls, rare china, so many flowers. She knew not whether to praise or blame. But her manner changed the moment she had passed the door. She was no longer the shrewd daughter of a self-seeking farmer. The atmosphere of the house transfigured her.

"You came here often in the old days," Canning said; "why did you come, Miss Jesse?"

"Oh," she cried, cringing, "I could never, never tell you."

"But I could. You came because you were able to live in another age, among another people. You came because imagination has rare gifts for some of us, and they were yours. I knew it when I first saw you in this room; I admired you because of it. Now, honestly, is not this the truth?"

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"If I must tell you," she pouted; and then, "Why did you bring me here, Mr. Canning? That's a question for a question."

"I brought you here that I might try to understand you. Was that quite a hopeless business—a mutual understanding?"

She shook her head sagely.

"My father says that no man ever understands a woman—and doesn't wish to. What can it matter to you whether you understand me or not? I am only a farmer's daughter, while you——"

"Are a farmer's son. That's telling you my history. But I want to show you my pictures. Do you like pictures, Miss Jesse? They tell me you are very clever with your brushes. Well, come here and paint when you like. I shall be very glad to see you, and we shall be quite alone."

She looked up quickly at this—the dark eyes shot a ray of suspicion, but as instantly softened to kindness. The Castle open to her again, and at the bidding of the stranger!

"I should like to come," she exclaimed; and then, "I have never seen pictures like these. How ugly some of them are."

"Artists would not agree with you. Come, now, that is a study of children by Sir Joshua Reynolds. I paid a great deal of money for that. You don't find the angels ugly?"

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"They are sweet faces. I was thinking of the picture next to it—the lady crowned with stars."

"Ah, Ariadne, after Rubens. A Grecian edition of a three-person play—do I puzzle you? Well, the case of a lady who ran away from her father's home because she fell in love with a fine fellow who deserted her. Then came the other man who crowned her with stars—not from Tiffany's. The allegory is of the rich man snapping up the relics of a dead passion. Now, I can't understand that. The woman who loves me must love me wholly. I should be a passionate lover—she must be a passionate mistress. I shall ask for blind devotion, willing consent—there must be no modernity about it, nothing but her love. Could you believe that?"

She looked at him, her lips parted, her bosom heaving.

"Yes," she said; "I have loved like that in my dreams."

"Here in this room?"

"Yes, yes, here in this room."

"A figure your imagination sent to you—cavalier, soldier, prince of cities, a hero in shining armor. Then comes modernity in pepper and salt—alas, alas! are there any lovers in this age, or is all sentiment bound in vellum and gilt-clasped?"

She but half understood him, and they continued their tour of the gallery. Madonnas in the blues

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which Murillo loved earned but a titter or a shy question—she cared nothing for the mighty allegories which Tintoretto dreamed. When she stopped it was before a modern canvas, open and yellow and rich in marbles. Here a fine fellow capered on a horse, while above at the barbican my lady flung him a rose. This had blazed in a Christmas number; the author told you that the man was in disgrace, and rode away with shame shrouded on the pummel. But Jesse knew nothing of the story. “How beautiful!” she said—and Canning smiled.

“She’s given him a rose. The fellow was accused of cheating, and rode away to the wilderness. She, of course, believed nothing. You can see the crowd in the background—they always spent their days gossiping on marble seats when Henry III. was King of France—the crowd is glad, and says he’s done for. But he carries the rose into the wilderness—which reminds me, Miss Jesse, you have a red rose in your dress. Upon my word, what a coincidence!”

He stepped back to look straight into her eyes. She could not utter a single word.

And he plucked the rose from its nesting place and put it to his lips.

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CHAPTER XVII

WISDOM OF THE SIMPLE

SHE came almost every day, wondering at her courage, but impelled by it to come. He had invited her to continue her studies in the Long Gallery, and she obeyed him—caring so little for art, so much for her secret. As an altar in a church, so was her easel set up. She must paint because he had commanded it. Ah, but to listen for his step in the corridor beyond, to bend to the canvas at his entry, to feel his breath upon her neck as he bent over her—to know!

Now, here was a man who had discovered in an instant the master-key to life. He knew nothing of it in his boyhood, the world had not given it to him; shame and the abyss had taught him nothing. But Bell Island revealed the golden gate and showed him the way.

An islet of green downs in a fair waterway; the coast of England shimmering upon his horizon; far down in the valley a village, and beyond, the ships—but here in this droning house a sense of isolation

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and security which satisfied him beyond all words to tell. Canning had come to the place to rest. Perhaps some ambition to found a little kingdom, to be the master of its people, sent him across the seas. But he had found instead—Jesse. And he had but to find her to perceive in her love a finality which should crown his life.

This child of the untutored life, this waif of the cliffs, this black-eyed Madonna of the sea, with her plump bare feet and her round pink limbs, her good common sense and her moments of ecstasy—what a gem to wear, what a treasure for his keeping! And she had responded already to those swift advances the world taught him how to make. She thrilled at his touch, let her warm hand rest in his, looked into his heart and did not quail—nobody but Jesse counted now. He did not care twopence what the people did or what they forbore to do. The old masterfulness said that he had but to speak and his desires were gratified.

They were critical days in the lives of both, and for the most part lived alone. When Hobby, who had been over on the mainland laying the foundations of his church, returned to Bell Island, he sized up the affair in a moment.

“Do you mean to marry her, Canning?” he asked; and Canning said “yes” as quickly.

“Then you have told her all the story?”

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"The story! What story?"

"My dear fellow, I can't put it plainer. She ought to know. Her father ought to know. I don't think you can keep it from them—you have no right to do so."

It came as a thunderclap to Canning; firstly, because he had never faced the question squarely, and, secondly, because Jesse's position distorted his view and showed him no true proportions of the affair. In London he had come to understand what it means to have been in prison—the hopelessness of the outlook, the utter abandonment, the perpetual voicing of the past, the social branding which no iron could better. But here upon Bell Island he had almost obliterated the truth. A farmer's daughter! What were business affairs to her, the vortex and its victims, the giddy pinnacles and the black depths? He was neither thief nor criminal. If he had failed, his failure was well understood in Threadneedle Street, where half the dealers might be prosecuted on a similar charge to-morrow. Certainly, no scruples of his conscience drove him to confession.

"Do you really mean, Hobby, that I must put myself in the penitentiary because of these people? But I'll ask you another question. Why did I come to Bell Island at all?"

"Oh, my dear Canning, you came at my request

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—to rest. You came because your friends treated you badly and you wished to make a new home. I thought you were wise to come, I think you would be wise to marry Jesse Fearney—if you tell her father everything.”

“Her father! Oh, come, that’s beyond all reason. Am I to go upon my hands and knees in the mud because I have fallen in love with a farmer’s daughter?”

“I don’t think that. You are a judge of men, and will know. We take a very favorable view of things when they are gilded sufficiently. I should say old Fearney will be very reasonable. If he does not think that you ought to tell Jesse, very well, it’s his business, and you can always tell her when you’re married.”

“When I am married; yes, I could tell her then. You have put something new into my head, Hobby. Frankly, I never thought it would be anything to these people. Perhaps I do not understand even yet. It is difficult for a man who has been through the mill. I may be, in the world’s eyes, no better than the lowest ruffian at Portland—yes, I must not forget it—but the farmer, that crabbed old devil who has done me all the mischief—— No, it’s impossible, Hobby—you will admit yourself that it is impossible!”

Hobby admitted nothing of the kind; but he

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turned the subject adroitly, knowing that it would be henceforth much in Canning's mind. And this was true. It haunted him from that moment. He thought upon it waking and sleeping, debated it in lonely places apart, began to ask himself if this indeed were not the aftermath of a punishment which already had won the commiseration of some of his fellow men.

To bear the brand eternally. To feel the hurt of it even upon this lonely shore, from whose heights he could see the England whence they had driven him. And no way of escape, save by that confessional which the Almighty has built for every man and every man must visit. Nor had he a doubt now that his friend was right. Never again could he look into the child's eyes if an image of his own cowardice must meet him there. He would tell her that very morning. Was she not already in the Long Gallery awaiting him? He would throw himself upon her pity, he would tell her the story, he who had never dared to speak of his past since the prison gates were opened for John Canning to pass out.

The determination was very real, and took him to the gallery without delay. Jesse was there, of course, not wearing stockings and the ribbands this time, but Jesse of the Pharos again, barefooted and with her hair upon her shoulders, the Jesse he had

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asked her to be in some mood of a sensuous desire. Seated upon the edge of an old mahogany table, she had an easel before her, and an ill-done sketch of the "Knight of the White Swan" in black outline upon it. Canning remembered that he had suggested this very picture to her—unconsciously his mind had anticipated Ernest Hobby's question. Coincidence would never have named such a study—he could not believe it possible.

Now Jesse looked up from her work for an instant as Canning entered, but as swiftly resumed her task. It needed no formality of words to express her pleasure or to read the story which her eyes betrayed. Was not this poor pencil of hers sketching the White Knight as her own imagination shaped him—no figure of myth and legend, but of this very room, the master of Bell Island and, for her, the master of the world? The story as her lover had told it to her, in soft words breathed into her eager ear, went straight to the heart of her own romance and lingered there. She delighted in all that poetic comparison, applauding faith and shedding secret tears upon the treachery. And now her pencil sought to portray the dream, but succeeded in nothing more than a sorry smudge of bedraggled plumes and swans most miserable.

"Oh," she said pitifully, "why did they tell me I was an artist?"

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He came and stood by her side, and looked kindly at so ill an effort.

"But it gives you pleasure to draw, does it not?" he asked her.

"It gives me pleasure to see such things with my eyes—I cannot make others see them."

"But the story is your own story. You know the man—I can see that your Knight would never have been betrayed."

"His secret would have been safe with me."

"Whatever it had been?"

"He would not have been afraid—when we set up an image in our hearts we know it wholly. There are few secrets a woman does not discover, Mr. Canning."

"And few she does not imagine she has discovered."

Jesse did not like these swift asides. They entered in so often, elbowing her pretty idols and shattering them with the wand of a satire very foreign to her own nature. She would have preferred a child's make-believe, castles and keeps and moated dungeons, Sir Rupert of the Black Plumes and a veritable Dulcinea del Toboso.

"Oh," she said pettishly, "you are never serious, Mr. Canning."

"And your knights are always serious. Imagine a knight's laugh when he had his vizor on."

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"My father always says that they saved a fortune in shoe leather."

"Your father also being a Philistine. Is it true, by the way, that he is still over on the mainland? I heard the rumor yesterday."

"He is very much there now. I cannot tell you why. He does not like to speak of his business to me."

"You are wise to respect his reticence. After all, there is a good deal in a man's life with which women have no concern."

"I suppose there must be. My father thinks all girls were born for the dairy—he is afraid to trust me with the least thing."

"Even a letter. There is a little bird which tells me of a letter."

Jesse sprang up, blushing furiously.

"How did you know?" she cried; and then, "Why, I do believe I've left it at home."

"There's no doubt at all about it—the girl came up with it ten minutes ago. I see it has been sent to you in another envelope, and that you were to deliver it yourself to me."

"That's my father's way of doing things. He would be thinking of the postage. Well, there it is. I'm sure it's about something dreadful."

Canning opened the letter uneasily. He was a little flushed, and his hand not so steady as it had

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been. Premonition told him the truth—the old man had heard the story and wished to be sure of it.

“DEAR SIR,” the note ran,

“Be good enough to inform me if you are the John Canning, late of London, referred to in the enclosed newspaper. My daughter will bring me your answer, which I shall make known to her or not as the necessity may arise. Her frequent visits to your house must be my excuse for troubling you upon a matter which is painful.

“Sir, yours obediently,

“JAPHON FEARNEY.”

Canning read the letter, and then opened the newspaper cutting. It referred to his trial at the Old Bailey, a highly colored report full of the necessary sensations. This he had never seen hitherto. There is some mercy of the aftermath of punishment which shuts the door upon the condemned criminal immediately; banishes him beyond the range of clamor and hides his own disgrace from his weary eyes. Canning had believed in prison that men thought lightly of his offence. The newspaper shocked him. It wailed of widows and orphans, of fortunes lost and homes ruined; it spoke of financial wolves preying upon a weak and ignorant humanity. And he—he was the man.

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Oh, to tell the child this—this little dreamer with the White Knight rowing on the golden lake of her happiness, to break in upon her visions with such a story, to say to her, “Read—I am the man”! Canning knew now that he could not tell her—at any rate, not here in the citadel of her dreams. It might be that he would never tell her. A powerful sense of the justice of a father’s appeal animated a quick response, however, and he sat down at a desk and wrote the monosyllable “Yes” across the paper. Then he folded and sealed the letter.

“Please take that to your father,” he said; and then very earnestly, “Do you expect him to-day?”

“It will be to-day,” she stammered, amazed by his manner.

“Then please to take it at once. He is waiting for it.”

He turned and left her. The rose at her heart was unplucked this day. She believed that some great misfortune had overtaken them both, and crept from the Castle with the step of one who is affronted and ashamed.

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CHAPTER XVIII

JAPHON RESOLVES UPON SILENCE

JESSE hastened with her letter to the farm, but her father had not yet returned. As a matter of fact he did not put off from Barnstaple until seven o'clock that night, and when he gained the open sea an obstinate wind from the sou'west made passage difficult. Later on there fell a dead calm, and the September night was ushered in upon that—a night of a mackerel sky and a lopping sea, of vast ships upon a hazy horizon, and the fishermen's boats drifting upon a sluggish tide.

Japhon made no complaint of the delay. In truth, he liked these lonely nights at sea; liked their opportunities for quiet reflection, their changing beauty, the panorama of sky and shore which marked the river's channel; and then across the waste of waters to those stars upon a near horizon, which spoke of the harbor and of home. A true seaman, he dared the passage jauntily, would have scoffed at caution mongers and derided those who prated of shallows or unfriendly shores. His peril

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did not lie here. He could remember that with equanimity upon this particular occasion, when he sailed with no other object than that of making his home, and traded no other merchandise than that of his own thoughts.

Angus had been wise at last. It was time to let the business go, for the time being, at any rate. Well enough for the poor seamen to run their paltry kegs of spirit and bales of tobacco—but when a man dealt in more dangerous commodities, when the penalties would amount to a small fortune and default would spell an exemplary sentence, then truly should Prudence get a hearing. He was pleased with Angus, very pleased; and as he sat back in the cuddy of his ketch, smoked an honest pipe and watched the lazy movements of the two men in the bows, he came as near to content as Japhon Fearney had been for many a long day.

He was going home to marry Jesse, his daughter, and to humble the man who would take her to wife. The truth about Canning's story was now perfectly well known to him. This fine gentleman had tried to rob other fine gentlemen, and the law had caught him in the act. Very well, that was his misfortune, a misfortune by which both father and daughter should profit presently. "Let him come to me on his hams," the old fellow put it coarsely, "and I will listen to him. He wants my daughter pretty

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bad, and by all accounts would make her a tolerable husband. Well, let him have her when he knows how to ask for her. That will make me master of the place, and there'll be no call to tell any one else unless they inquire about it. His interest will be my interest—and he shall pay for both.”

The thought, base and mercenary, pleased the old man and moved him to a sardonic smile. After all, luck had sent such a man to the island—for without luck one of a very different stamp might have bought the place and ruled there. A convicted felon must be easier to deal with. Japhon foresaw himself putting his hand deep into Canning's fortune and still unsatisfied. It would be better than *the* business, he said, and entail none of the risks.

For surely there were risks enough. This very night, for instance, what a fright he had! It would have been about nine o'clock when it had fallen very dark, and the wind died away to a mere whisper. He lay some two miles from the English shore and eight, perhaps, from Bell Island. The yacht's red and green lanterns were burning brightly, and she rode easily to a lazy swell. As to the two hands, they lay full length in the fo'castle; Japhon had just knocked out the ashes of a soothing pipe, when the black shape of a launch moved by him swiftly in the darkness, and was instantly lost in the void be-

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yond the aureole of the cuddy lantern. Japhon had not expected this—to-night. He started up and asked the men a hurried question.

“Did they speak you, Jo?”

“Not a word, master.”

“Then what, in thunder, is he doing here to-night.”

“Can’t tell you, sir—nobody said nothing.”

“Hail him if he goes about—speak cautious, Jo. Hail him ordinary.”

“He’s going about now, master. I hear the wash.”

All listened and heard the hum of a steamer’s propeller, fitful and varying. The man Isaacson, the Swede, said curtly, “Backing, master.” Jo, the nigger, listened with his ear laid almost to the water.

“He’s coming on the starboard quarter, Masser Japhon.”

“Then get out your sweeps and stand by. Does he think he’ll sink me for a change?—the jowned idiot, why didn’t he send word?”

He was trembling with excitement, the old man who had dared many a venture such as this and not known a tremor. A quick eye searching the hither sea discovered neither the masthead light of any ship at anchor nor the lanterns of a moving vessel. Apprehension, he knew not of what development, dominated his acts. He waited for the launch, erect

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at the tiller and defiant. The fools! Why had they not warned him? And here they were blundering down in the darkness—without a glimmer of light save that which glowed above the launch's funnel.

"Ahoy, ahoy! Where are you coming to then?"

"What ship's that?"

"The *Pharos* out of Bell Island. Who are you?"

"I'll ask you another; where are your lanterns? We've seen none of them."

"We didn't know——"

An angry roar from the cuddy shut the negro's mouth. Japhon had listened with his heart in his mouth, but this new folly almost choked his utterance.

"What have we to do with lanterns?" he cried. "Ain't ours burning? Do you go mind your own affairs. Where's yourn?—I'll ask ye that to begin with. What are you doing here like pirates in the dark? Don't talk about the Government—no Government has the right to sink a man in his own ship—but I'll speak about that to the Admiral, and sharp, too."

A suave voice speaking from a hidden place upon the launch's deck answered the wild words. Japhon's heart sank within him when he heard it. "Good evening, Mr. Fearney. I'm Morris of Bideford. Sorry to have put you to any inconvenience, but we're looking for strangers. You won't have

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seen an unlikely ketch between here and the *Pharos* to-night?"

The old man needed all his courage to answer this; nevertheless, he spoke out loudly.

"There was no stranger about when I came out. If I sight one I'll signal. You should go more careful, Mr. Morris. There's other beside strange ketches in these waters."

"To be sure, to be sure—I'll remember that, Mr. Fearney. Good night to you now—and all well at home, I hope?"

Japhon mumbled something as he gave an order to the hands to haul on the jib sheet. A puff of wind coming up from the south helped him to drift away from the launch and to lose her quickly in the darkness, but he carried with him a clear impression of the spoken words, and could have set them down on paper there and then. A strange ketch! The coastguard searching for her—without lanterns. The business known and now become the chief affair of the officers at Bideford! As in a flash he recalled the nigger's foolish hail and its consequences! What would the man Morris make of that? What interpretation would he put upon it? Good God! he said, if the black man had done for them—and in a torrent of anger he began to rate the pair of them. Did they know what they were doing? Did they understand that this meant jail,

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starvation afterward, or a lousy fo'castle of some foreign trader? Had he not rewarded them richly—and they would not learn! To serve him like this—to bring danger upon him and all their heads when danger lay a hundred miles away.

The men answered nothing to this wild tirade. In truth they cared little, believing that the law would not trouble itself overmuch about two poor sailor-men. Indeed, the nigger lit a pipe as he talked, and when Japhon called him over and bade him take the tiller, he plainly showed that he would stand no nonsense.

"You look after yourself, Masser Japhon—me and Isaacson, we do our own business. You make yourself safe—no matter about us."

"No matter—you black fool. Is prison no matter?"

The nigger grinned.

"I do five months in St. Louis jail for hitting white man. I can do same here if white man call me black fool."

Japhon had no answer. He knew well enough that he was in the power of these men, and no match physically for either of them. The hulking figure of the black man, the white teeth grinning in the darkness, the catlike eyes frightened him. What easier than for such a man to throw him into the sea—and come to port with a story of an acci-

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dent? Japhon turned away without a word and went down to the cabin to mix himself a stiff glass of rum and to nurse a thousand fears.

Discovery—it could be nothing less than that—black discovery, and afterward the end! He, the great example, the chief man on Bell Island, the magistrate, the preacher, arrested by common police officers and taken over to his trial on the mainland. And afterward the crash, the monstrous fine, the exemplary sentence. He could see in imagination the little knots of gossipers discussing the news, hear the story running from cottage to cottage. How some of them would rejoice! And the man up at the Castle, why he had not thought of him. Ay, truly this would be John Canning's day. Japhon reflected ironically that this was the son-in-law whose fortunes he would have shared, and by whose past he would have profited. What a mockery of hope! What a turn of fortune's wheel!

The crisis of a personal peril is rarely unaccompanied by some interval of a better hope—nor was Japhon Fearney unblessed by that. Coming up on deck at dawn, he discovered the ketch to be still some miles from the harbor and the wind fallen to a dead calm in spite of the promise of yesternight. A clear, cold light declared the familiar scene in all its bald outline—the rugged jetty, the iron lantern, the beached ships, the white houses be-

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yond, the green jalousies, the school, the chapel. How often had he landed there and walked up the hill with the firm tread and the jaunty carriage of a man who had succeeded! With what dignity and severity had he not administered justice in the puny court! And what veneration had been paid to him—how the poor folk hung upon his lightest word, that haply it might bring them profit! The night might have changed all this—Japhon remembered that he might be landing there for the last time, enjoying the last hour of triumph he would know upon Bell Island.

He remembered it and, none the less, a sudden freshet of consolation reassured him. How if his fears were purely of his own imagination? Would so clever a man as Holly Angus have neglected to utter a warning had there been danger abroad? And why should Morris, the exciseman, leap to so swift a conclusion? Japhon said that he had been a fool to make so much of so little, and fell to blaming the dark for all his despair. Let him go ashore and trust to the security of his own house. They had yet to prove the charge, yet to connect him with it. He was a clever man who knew how to invent a story and to stand by his invention, and this he would do when the occasion arose. To-day, for instance, being the Sabbath, he must preach to the people as heretofore, conduct the service in the

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little chapel, neglect none of his common duties; and he fell to wondering what his text would be and how to treat it. Could he not appeal to their compassion—ay, prepare them for what was to come and engage their sympathy? A cunning whisper of self-interest mingled curiously with an unfeigning regret for the truth. He must choose a passage from the Book which would predispose his fellows to deal kindly with him when the evil day came—if it ever came, as he dared now to hope that it might not.

It was eight o'clock when he made the harbor and half an hour later when he arrived at the farm. The tide did not serve for the creek he used habitually, nor was it safe to make it in a calm because of the currents. So Japhon went up through the village—where few were abroad or even awake at such an hour of the Sabbath morn. Jesse, however, had hardly slept a wink the whole night through, and she came down to the gate to meet him, carrying John Canning's letter, and very wistful for her father to read it.

"I was to be sure to give it you yourself, father—Mr. Canning told me particularly."

He looked at her, impatient at the interruption.

"Did he speak of what was in it, girl?"

"Not a word; but I could see he was upset."

"Ah, he would be; well, I shall have more to say

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about that presently. Do you go in and get my breakfast, for I'm fair tired—nearly twelve hours crossing, and not enough wind to 'dry a pocket handkerchief. There wouldn't have been any one here while I was gone?"

"Not any one; who should there be?"

"No strangers from the mainland, nor anybody like that?"

"No one at all. Mr. Hobby left for England last night—he went across in Mr. Canning's new launch."

"He did—ay, but it wouldn't be him—no, no; get you into the house, for I'm fair perishing with cold and hunger."

He pushed her aside and entered the house impatiently. In truth suspicion was busy once more, and troubled him with many thoughts. Could it be possible that the launch he had passed last night was John Canning's launch? Had this fine gentleman from England been the informer after all? A moment's reflection declared the thing to be ridiculous. Jesse was upset because the man had shown up in his true colors after reading the letter. So much the better—he would be easier to deal with.

"Well," he said presently, when he sat at a well-spread table, and the dejected girl had poured him out a cup of steaming coffee; "well, so you gave Mr. Canning the letter?"

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"You know that I did, father—you have his answer."

"Ay, ay, but the answer to a letter don't always say as much as the hand that wrote it. I reckon he wouldn't like my message; did he tell you so?"

"He was very strange and cold. He seemed to be somebody else in an instant. I don't think he said very much to me—I came away at once."

Japhon raised his rugged brows.

"There was no cause to do that. Perhaps the matter don't concern you at all. You'll be going up to the house agen come morning. I wouldn't stop away if I were you."

"I shall go when Mr. Canning asks me."

"Oh, he'll do that quick enough by all account."

He laughed a little coarsely, and for some while continued to watch her closely while he ate. She was much changed these two days—had lost some of her good color and all her high spirits. Well, the man should bring them back again.

"I'll be going up to the Castle belike the morn to see John Canning—there may be a word about somebody else. Shall I answer for her or will she speak for herself—when I think fit?"

"Oh, father, please——"

"What—I'm to hold my tongue?"

"Yes, yes. I will never see Mr. Canning again if you do not."

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"Perhaps you'll never see him again anyway if I choose to say the word. I'm thinking upon it and what's best to be done. Now, do you go and get your hat on—it's time we thought of chapel."

She did not answer him. He finished a hearty breakfast, and having clothed himself in good broadcloth and an ancient beaver hat, set off for chapel—a man of many moods and of few resolutions.

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CHAPTER XIX

THE RESOLUTION IS RECONSIDERED

THERE had been a church upon Bell Island in the fifteenth century, but it fell into ruins during the sixteenth, and is to-day hardly more than a mound of rubble in a holy acre. Untroubled by creeds, yet not backward in the sentiment of a primitive faith, the people worship in the little chapel by the harbor and are content with its humble offices. Sometimes a stranger will come from the mainland to preach to them. There have been resident ministers from time to time, but none has remained long on this lonely isle, where bare subsistence is not always a possibility, and a missionary's success all difficult of attainment.

Japhon Fearney never regretted the lack of missionary enterprise, for it helped his own power and influence. He led the services in the absence of any other, and spoke to the people when no preacher came from the mainland. On this particular Sabbath morn, he had gone down to the chapel prepared to open the path of justification for himself, but he found the task difficult enough, and handled

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it but clumsily. To be honest, the throne of his own puny majesty had never seemed to him more desirable. He spoke to the simple people of sin and its consequences, of the need of personal humility, of the danger of hasty judgment, and of the due recognition of those temptations by which men are assailed. A shrewd hearer, none the less, would have named it a justification of much that was done by the people of Bell Island in defiance of his Majesty's Customs—and as such, both Abe Benson and Tom Weede took it to be, when they came out of church and lurched down toward the "Jolly Admiral"—just, as they said, to see if the wind had shifted.

"The old man do git uncommon rankeerous as the years go by," Abe ventured; to which Tom Weede, a melancholy fisherman, rejoined, "'Tis the women, Abe, as puts gray hairs on a man's head for sure."

"And something more than gray hairs on their own, if my son Frank speaks true—ay, queer tales do he tell of the girls down Bristol way, though I've no mind to be listening to 'em at my age. Will ye have a glass of beer, Tom—ye look precious poorly this mornin', and Japhon he be no man to put holiness into ye gladly, I must say?"

Tom Weede agreed, and they entered the parlor of the "Jolly Admiral," where others of the island

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quickly gathered. Here, to the general astonishment, a stranger was discovered—no other than our old friend Benjamin Crabbe, who, having failed to distinguish himself in the stables at Newmarket, had found his way to Bell Island, to see what was to be got out of his old comrade of the prisons, John Canning. Such an event as the arrival of a stranger on the Sabbath had not happened upon Bell Island three times in as many years. It is true that officers from the warships occasionally came ashore, when their vessels lay at anchor under the lea of the island, and western gales raged in the ocean; but this abnormal product of an unknown civilization, this begaitered, horsy, ferret-faced little man, he, surely, had “escaped out’er some ’sylum,” as Tom Weede did not hesitate to say.

To give him his due, Mr. Crabbe spoke of his old friend, the owner of the Castle, with great respect. Yes, he had known him in other years—he did not say where; but he might declare that they had been closely associated in many an undertaking, and that his reception at the Castle would be a friendly one. If he hesitated to go up and thought it better to send a letter, that was his natural delicacy.

“A man is like a horse,” he said; “come up to him unawares and likely he’ll kick you. But say ‘Gently, boy,’ and hold a carrot in your hand and there’s no kinder creature stabled.”

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"Be you a-going up ter the Castle wi' a carrot?" Tom Weede asked, and this provoked the stranger to great merriment.

"What a bloomin' mug you are!" he said. "My carrot goes in an envelope, and here I wait for the butler to show me in. Now drink with me, mates, and let me forget that I am a stranger—although knowing your master very well."

There was some demur at this—the bolder spirits asking who was their master, and Abe Benson declaring that no man rightly had any master "on airth" except his own wife, and she only at the proper times and seasons. When order was restored and the stranger's hospitality had softened the company toward his view, a groom came down from the Castle with an answer to the letter; and at this Mr. Benjamin Crabbe plucked up his spirit wonderfully, and immediately drained his glass as a preliminary to an early departure.

"Sir John is a gent," he said; "let me see the man who says he ain't. Did I speak truth or false when I said he would be glad to see me—by express, mates? Well, here's the answer to that—his own 'andwriting, his own letter. Oh, I knew my man—no doubt of it—we didn't live as brothers four years together for him to stable me in an outhouse. I thank you kindly, mates, and good day to you."

He cocked a shabby bowler hat upon the side of

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a jaunty head, and followed the groom to the Castle. It was six o'clock when he returned, to the great satisfaction of a little group down by the harbor, and the particular pleasure of old Abe Benson, who had made up his mind to drink rum with him. Now it became apparent that John Canning's hospitality had been altogether too much for the volatile stranger. He talked incessantly, answered questions at random, fumed at the closed doors of the inn, and concluded with an indiscretion which set Bell Island aflame. And this, oddly enough, was provoked by the question of that usually silent fisherman, Bill Hunning, who, provoked by the repeated references to "Sir John," at length ventured an interrogation.

"'Sir John,' doo 'ee say—then he's been made a barrernite."

"No baronet at all, my man. We called him Sir John at Portland, and a better fellow never carried the broad arrow, so help me Heaven."

Some one laughed foolishly at this—few understood its significance. Perhaps, had not that shrewd person, Frank Benson, chanced to be on the pier wall at the moment, the remark would have spent itself aimlessly as an ill-timed jest, which none but a stranger in his cups would have uttered. Young Benson possessed a quicker perception. This man was telling a tale which should be heard.

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"Here, I say, are you speaking of Mr. Canning?"

"Of who else, my boy?"

"Then keep a civil tongue in your head, and don't tell your lies here."

"Who says it's a lie?"

"I do. You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"Look here, young man; well, wasn't he in Portland? Didn't he do seven years, and wasn't he 'Sir John' to me and many? Oh, I'm off my chump then—I'm losing my blessed eyesight. And he didn't give me ten pound to-day because of what's what. One of the best mates, one of the best that ever got into the saddle to ride the Seven Year welter—I'd like to see the man who'd tell me he ain't."

"You mean to say that Mr. John Canning has been in prison?"

Benjamin Crabbe laughed aloud.

"Hark at him—and the noospapers to be had for a blooming ha'penny. Has he been in prison?"

He appealed to the company, thinking somebody surely must know. Here lay the secret of his blind loquacity—he thought that all the world knew, and John Canning, be sure, had never stooped to argle bargle with such a man for silence, or contemplated such a scene as this. Sober, Benjamin Crabbe could have held his tongue—but in this condition, never.

And so he put to sea at last, still protesting that

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Sir John was the best gentleman in the world, and that the days he spent with him in Portland prison were the finest in his life. Those on shore watched him in awe, as one who had been sent providentially to the relief of Bell Island and the confusion of its tyrant. Ingrates, as their kind, these were without a spark of sympathy either for the man or his intentions. Had not John Canning treated them with an Englishman's habitual hauteur, had not he made much of their evil qualities and little of their good? But more than all, and first in their thoughts, had he not wished to ruin them by his schemes for harbors and docks, and Heaven knew what new-fangled notions beside? Oh, it was a pretty group which gathered at the door of the "Jolly Admiral" presently!

"And him nothing but a jail-bird arter all," said old Abe Benson, spitting in contempt. "Well, mates, we might ha' knowed that no gentleman would ha' thought o' such things as he thought on."

"And playing puss in the cove with old Japhon's darter—fine she'd look along wi' such as 'ee, mates. That be a pretty match for the old man to be taken on. Ay, old Japhon will be mighty pleased to hear this."

"It's my opinion," said Bill Hunning slowly, "that we'll have to be after locking up our windys

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at nights. He'll have learned a trick or two down Portland way, and wantin' to practice may be."

"And him for makin' the new harbor to rob honest men of their rights. Let me hear o' this again and I'll have my answer. Ay, mates, will you be put upon by a jail-bird? Be jowned to his impudence!"

"What's best for 'ee," interjected Tom Weede, "is to get into his hummin'-top of a boat and get him back wheer he come from. We was honest folk afore he landed, mates, and if we hev done a bit of spirits and bacca, well, I take leave to say it was gentlemen's emplyment. But this 'ere—this is vulgar, I will say."

"What I like fine," said Abe Benson, "was him a-buildin' of a church. Now, that there, mates, was wholly colossal. A church—damme, he'll be preachin' to us next."

They laughed heartily at this, and the dark found them still merry and excited. Be sure that every grown woman on Bell Island had the news before her first sleep that night, and that a willing tongue carried it also to Japhon Fearney's house. Frank Benson, in truth, went up to the farm in a state of voluble ecstasy quite foreign to him. For days past he had known the truth about Jesse and the Englishman, and his mild devotion toward Japhon

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Fearney's daughter had become almost an obsession of mad jealousy, which would have worked any mischief but for the craven will behind it. And now this weapon was in his hands—this surprising truth—this missile which should destroy in an instant the house of his enemy's hopes.

Japhon received him very coldly. He had not an idea why he came, and thought for an instant that it might be to propose for Jesse—a piece of insolence the old man would have been quite capable of punishing. When he heard the truth, blurted out between wild gestures and loud exclamations, he also realized in an instant that the whole fabric of his building had come tumbling to the ground, and that nothing but a *volte-face*, absolute, and immediate, could save his reputation and that of his daughter.

"Be careful what you are saying, Benson," he said, the judicial manner prevailing above his curiosity; "this is a dangerous thing to talk about; the law may have something to say to those who do not hold their tongues. He was in prison, you say; ah, but how do you know it's true?"

"We can prove it, sir. The man looked just like a criminal himself—he told everybody—he said it was in the newspapers. If it wasn't, we can soon find out; but I'll send over to a friend in Barnstaple to-morrow to make sure."

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"You send over! What's it to do with you?"

"Oh, but I thought it had to do with us all—a jail-bird at the Castle."

"Do you visit there, then?"

"I! Oh, I've been up. But I was thinking of Jesse."

"Leave my daughter's name out of it. I'll take good care of her."

"Well, I'm sorry I came; but I thought it my duty."

"Duty! That's every man's cant when he wants to do his neighbor an injury. Suppose this gentleman has met with misfortune—what right have you to judge him?"

"I don't judge him, I'm leaving you to do that, sir; and some of us don't call a man a gentleman when he's been in prison."

"Some of you deserve to go to prison for calling yourselves gentlemen—that's the truth. Take a word from me and keep your mouth shut. This is no news for common folk."

"Oh, but they know already. I don't suppose there's a man or a woman either who doesn't know. It'll be all the talk to-morrow."

"Ay. they've precious little to do but talk in this place. You yourself now—do I hear that you've found employment? Daisy-cutting on the cliff head doesn't butter any bread. You'll be wanting some

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young woman to marry you by and by, I suppose. Isn't it time you learned to do an honest day's work?"

Frank Benson colored to his eyes, but with rage and chagrin rather than with shame.

"You forget, Mr. Fearney—my occupation is literature."

"Well, you'd be a better man in my eyes if I saw you with a hay fork in your hand. Poetry don't feed no woman's bairns. The girl you marry will want something more than that stuff on Saturdays, and who's to be earning it? Seek out an honest occupation—folks'll think no worse of you."

The young man rose in high dudgeon.

"I am much obliged to you," he said coldly; "when I want your advice I will come for it. I am sorry I came at all."

"Don't mention it. I'm always pleased to see young men and to have a talk with them. I was young once myself—though, thank God, no man ever gave me an education. I've got on very well without the poetry for a good many years, my lad, and mebbe I'll finish the same way. Good night to ye—I was sorry to miss your father at the chapel this night. Is he took with poetry also? Well, it's a rare misfortune surely."

Frank had nothing more to say, and they separated upon a commonplace. It was now about nine

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o'clock, and Jesse came in to lay the supper. She was still very reserved and shy before her father, and Frank Benson's visit had not reassured her. As for Japhon, he watched her anxiously, wondering in what way he should break the news, as break it he must. That this story had got about the island angered him more than he would have admitted to any man. For very shame now, nay, for the protection of his own reputation, he must forbid Jesse to visit the Castle or have anything to do with its master. Secrecy might have permitted what the known fact would not. He could never allow it to be said that he contemplated with equanimity the union of his daughter with a man who stood in the eyes of the world for a convicted felon.

"Jesse, my lass," he said at last, and in a kindly tone which won her interest, "you carried a letter to Mr. Canning for me yesterday."

"Yes, father."

"And he told you nothing of what was inside of it?"

"No, father."

"Then I must tell you, my dear. It's not a nice thing to talk about, and I do so unwillingly, but the truth's the truth, and deceit won't keep it from coming out. Now read that for yourself, and tell me what you make of it."

She took the letter from his hand, and placed a

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candle so that she might have light to read it. No child could have mistaken either the question or the answer—and yet she must dwell upon them, going over the lines one by one and asking herself many times if she read aright.

When she returned the paper to her father, her face was quite white and expressionless, and she feared almost to breathe lest she should break the spell and burst into tears.

“What does it mean, father? What is it?”

“A very sad story, my dear. John Canning, it appears, didn’t come among us with clean hands. He had soiled them in London years ago—he’s been in prison, Jesse, for cheating—that’s what’s the matter.”

“I’ll never believe it, father—never, never.”

“Why, all of us might say the same, Jesse; and what good’s served by it? We didn’t send him there—it wasn’t our faults.”

“Oh, but it’s an untruth—a wicked untruth. I’ll go to him.”

“Not so fast, my girl. That it’s no lie I’ve known some days, as my letter tells you. Why, Holly Angus told me the first day Canning came here. ‘You’ve got a convict over at the island,’ he said; and I wouldn’t hear him. It was kind to do that—we owe it to our fellow creatures to give scandal the cold shoulder when we can—and that’s what I

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said to Angus. 'Belike you're mistaken,' I said; and then he sent to London for the newspapers, and there it was for all the world to read. So I wrote to Mr. Canning himself, and you see what kind of an answer we get. Well, it's better so—better that we should know it now than afterward, when we might have been tarred with that brush ourselves. What we can do we will do—but it will be precious little among such a lot of clucking hens as you'll find on Bell Island. Now go to your bed, my dear, and think no more of it. We shan't be unkind to Mr. Canning—but the less we see of him the better, and that's charity to say. There'll be no more going to the Castle, of course—that I must insist upon to begin with."

She looked up, frightened and doubting.

"But, father——"

"I say it, and I mean it. My daughter has no place in that house."

"No place in Mr. Canning's house——"

"Nor any title to be seen talking to him in public. That's my last word on it, Jesse. You know whether I am to be obeyed or not."

There was a menace in the tone, and she turned away at it and quitted the room, with a step so soft, and a face so white and drawn, that all the pathos of her womanhood should have spoken eloquently to him and won upon his pity. They did not do so.

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He said that he might yet profit by John Canning's misfortune—but Jesse, never. That chapter of his schemes was finished and never would be reopened.

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CHAPTER XX

JESSE REVISITS THE CASTLE

JAPHON had believed that the chapter would never be reopened; but here he reckoned without a woman's unshaken faith and the courage begotten of it. Jesse, in truth, had made up her mind from the first moment of it to go to Canning and to hear the story from his own lips. So much she owed both to herself and to him—nor could her overmastering desire tolerate even such a delay as the conventions would dictate. She must go at once, she said—the night had never seemed to her so long.

And what a night of silent thought and sorrow it was!—a night spent at her bedroom window, whence she could look over the moonlit sea by which John Canning had come to Bell Island. How she feared for him, hoped for him, pitied him! Tempted by the letter to be indulgent toward her father's hasty judgment, her own remained unshaken. Not a thousand affirmations would convince her of John Canning's guilt, or permit her to believe that he had done any man a wrong. A trick, she said, an

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enemy's device, an affair above the common understanding of these simple folk who dwell upon the island.

And so she set out very early in the morning, clad in no fine gown of muslin, nor obedient to any prompting of her vanity; but just the little Jesse who had been surprised in the Long Gallery a few short weeks ago, and never would be surprised there again until her life's end. To old Martin at the gate she professed an affair of urgency. Let the hour be what it might, she must see the master of the Castle and see him alone. To which the old servitor responded by a glance at her naked feet, at her black hair tossed angrily about her shoulders, and the plain woolen shawl which hid her wan white face—and being properly astonished, could but venture a commonplace.

"Be you daft, girl, or what? Do you know it's not gone seven of the morning?"

"I care not what time it is—I must see him. Oh, go at once, Martin—he will never forgive you if you do not."

"Be your father ailing——"

"Oh, go, go," she cried, and stamping her foot she drove him headlong.

Now, John Canning had slept no better than Jesse, and the letter had answered for his vigil also. That old Japhon Fearney possessed his secret was of it-

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self a small affair—he did not care twopence for any man's opinion—but that the story should be told to Jesse by others was the graver matter. He could blame himself readily enough now for his own cowardice, and ask how it had served him. Perhaps, a deeper thought was one which hinted at the truth, speaking of Japhon's darker schemes and of the part Jesse might be compelled to play in them. "He will sell her to me," Canning thought; "promise to hold his tongue if I make it worth his while, and guard the menace against his own necessity. He is rascal enough, if young Irwin Benson is to be believed."

Here, then, came Temptation—parti-colored and a sorry bedfellow. Canning knew that he loved Jesse, but the depth of his love for her had not yet been probed. If he consented to be Japhon Fearney's instrument, he doubted not that he might marry her to-morrow, make her the mistress of the Castle and the servant of his desires. But he knew that he would never consent, that his dominant will would find such a burden intolerable, and that the child must share the consequences of his refusal. Indeed, a supreme contempt for the man and his methods was more in his thoughts even than his love for Jesse. Intolerable that he should be dictated to by this miserly farmer who, for aught he knew to the contrary, might be a very criminal—

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ay, intolerable, but inevitable, for such was the penalty of the downfall.

Upon such thoughts as these came Jesse to the Castle, and be sure no door was barred against her. Old Martin could not believe his ears when he was told to show Miss Fearney up immediately; the *valet-de-chambre* grinned like a baboon, and reflected with what additions he could retell the story in the meaner streets by Piccadilly. But Jesse came up nevertheless, and being conducted immediately to the Long Gallery, she found Canning awaiting her and at once declared the purport of her visit.

"Mr. Canning," she said quietly, "I thought that I must come to see you—I have something very important to say."

"About the letter you took to your father yesterday?"

"Yes, it is about that. My father came home yesterday morning—he had a long passage, he could not make the harbor before. I gave him your letter and he read it. Then, later on last night, we had a visit from Frank Benson. Mr. Canning—they know—the island knows; is it right that I, Jesse, should be the last to hear it?"

"To hear what, Jesse?"

"The truth, Mr. Canning—the truth, which is every woman's due when she has been taught to believe that a man loves her——"

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“But, Jesse——”

“You kept it from me, Mr. Canning. Even when you had the letter in your hand you said nothing to me. Oh, you might have spoken—that would have been kind to me. But you were silent—you were afraid to trust me. And now the people know—I shall be ashamed to go among them—they will point the finger at me everywhere. Oh, Mr. Canning—was that kind?”

She had never shown weakness before him hitherto, but the pathos of it mastered her now, and she sank into a chair sobbing bitterly. As for Canning, the wickedness of his own silence could no longer be denied. What a pitiful coward he had been! What a price to put upon his own self-esteem—the price of this child’s love and confidence! And he had bartered it deliberately, thrown honor into the scale that he might purchase a few hours of make-believe, and ride high upon that proud horse which was the White Knight’s due. Oh, folly surely and irreparable!

“Jesse,” he said, crossing the gallery to her side and kneeling there, “I was wrong not to tell you. But I wanted you to think well of me—I could not abase myself in your eyes. Jesse—do you not understand?”

She trembled at his touch, but knew, none the less, that he spoke the truth.

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"It is true then?" she said; "the story is true?"

"It is quite true, Jesse."

"Oh, no, no, I'll not believe it—tell me, for pity's sake—it is not true."

He took her hand in his and began to speak to her in a low voice. Never before had he spoken to any human being as he spoke to Jesse Fearney in that hour. And first of his school days, of their many successes both at work and play; his proud ambitions even as a lad; of his Cambridge days and a father's sacrifice which sent him there; of his early knowledge that brains must count in the end, and were the most potent weapons of success whatever the armor of birth and station. He would have been a lazy youth, he declared, but for the spur of ambition, driving him ever to unknown heights, and flattering him to unceasing labors. When he left Cambridge, it was not to dream of success, but to attain it. He tried to tell this mere child what the flotation of companies was; how money was obtained from many for the benefit of many; how real were the risks and how grave the responsibilities.

"I tried to do too much, Jesse. If I had succeeded in half my aims, the City would have called me a great financier. Others in London are doing every day what I did once, and being honored for it. Some of them are knighted by the King; others are made members of Parliament—society opens its

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arms to them; the aristocracy borrows money of them. If they fail, some trumpery charge is preferred against them and they go to prison—to satisfy the vengeance of those who have lost. In the old days, when people put their money into a company, they well understood that it was a speculation and that they might lose it. Now, they expect all companies to succeed, and if they do not succeed, they talk about prosecuting the directors. Well, I was one of those directors, and they prosecuted me because I was young and had been too successful. A misunderstanding about the transference of some shares—but you would never understand that—gave my enemies their opportunity. I was badly defended by a man who did not understand the intricacies of finance, and the Law condemned me. It condemned me, not for dishonesty, but for misfortune—as many a man has been and will be condemned, Jesse, in that strange place they call the City of London.”

He ceased abruptly, conscious, perhaps, of the futility of such a narration as this to such a child. But here he did less than justice to Jesse Fearney, who, if she did not understand him wholly, could at least say that the truth was as she believed it to be. John Canning had done no man any wrong. Her womanly sympathies made of him in this dark hour a greater hero than any that ever rode a proud

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white horse in any knightly company. Gladly would she have turned and held out her arms to him, that he might have taken her to his heart, there to make her sweet confession. But the very sorrow of his words forbade this thought of self. He had spoken to her as a grown woman, and so she would answer him.

"I could not sleep last night for thinking of all this," she said. "Oh, Mr. Canning, why did you not go to my father and speak to him as you have spoken to me? He is a hard man, but a just man—he would never have misjudged you. I am a woman, and cannot hope to make men understand."

"Is it anything to me, Jesse, while you yourself understand?"

"I came for that," she said proudly. "I came because I knew the story was false. My father forbade me to come, but I did not heed him. And now I shall go and tell them all. They shall do you justice here—I will compel them."

"Can you compel people to disbelieve what it pleases them to consider true? No, no, Jesse, you will say nothing at all about it. I have spoken to you because it was right that I should speak. If your father forbids you to come to my house, then we must obey him."

She looked at him—her eyes wide open in aston-

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ishment, her heart beating quickly. Was he not glad, then, that she had come?

"He forbids me because he does not understand. Was not your own letter to blame for that? Oh, Mr. Canning, you did not wish him to think it true?"

"I wish him to form such a judgment of my character as his knowledge of me prompts. Consider, Jesse; can I go to him upon my knees, imploring his better judgment? Would you go in my place? And is he not right when he says that I am wrong to let you come here? Consider, the world has the right to point the finger at me. I have failed, and every rogue who has not failed struts it proudly and cries, 'Here is a villain!' If you and I were to continue friends, the same would be said of you. 'She is the friend of a rogue,' they would say, 'of a man who has been in penal servitude.' Now, how can I allow them to say that? How can I permit it? Is not your father right after all? But, Jesse, you know what it means to me to say as much, you know what our friendship has been—you will not misunderstand?"

She stood quite still, a hand pressed to her breast, her eyes staring wildly into the void. This was her banishment. John Canning was sending her away.

"Of course—if you think——"

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"I think of nothing but your happiness, Jesse. It is the one thing I would give all the world to achieve."

"And you wish me never to come here again, Mr. Canning?"

"While your father forbids you, yes—for both our sakes. Oh, Jesse, Jesse, is not this a hard thing to say?"

"I will try to understand you, Mr. Canning. If I cannot do so at present, it is because I am not clever enough to know why a man refuses to believe what a girl has told him when she has spoken with all her heart. Oh, I shall never come—please don't think it. I shall go away at once as you wish me to, Mr. Canning—I am sorry that I came at all."

He knew not what to answer her. A moment of weakness would have undone them both and sent her sobbing to his arms. But now he understood that even friendship with Fearney's daughter must be denied to him, and that his very honor as a man depended upon his courage. Yes, he must let her go—the one friend among women whom he had ever known.

"I shall never forget the fact that you came, Jesse," he said quietly; "this day will be remembered by me to my life's end. And I shall not cease to hope—oh, God knows, that is never denied to us! I shall always hope that you will come back to me—

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that your father will send you, and that I shall have the right to receive you—in my house—as the woman I love more than anything on earth. Jesse, you will not forbid me to hope that?”

She shook her head—the tears forbade her to speak—and for a little while there was silence. All that she had meant to say to him, the warm expression of her unshaken faith, the protest of her love, went unspoken before this unexpected attitude, this surprising submission to her father’s will. She knew now that she had come to say “Good-by”—and she said it, offering her hand as she would have offered it to any stranger, but turning quickly that he might not see her shame.

“You told me once to remember,” she said quickly; and then, “Oh, Mr. Canning, I shall never forget.”

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CHAPTER XXI

THE FIRST STONE

CANNING had been over to the mainland twice since he established his home upon Bell Island; nor could the solicitation of his few friends turn him from his purpose to withdraw, for the time being at any rate, from a world which had treated him so ill.

Let it be confessed that he was the visionary no longer; all his fine schemes of a dominion over a simple people had long since been scattered before the winds of a somewhat vulgar reality. These island folk, he had come to see, were in no way different from their brothers and sisters of the city he had left—had no greater charity nor any exclusive possession of the elementary virtues. He found them immoral, selfish, and not a little disposed to be insolent. His desire to befriend them had been received coldly or with outspoken opposition. That Eldorado he would have founded stood now for an unattainable kingdom. He was merely the owner of the Castle—and these men were the churls who would thwart him.

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Such had been the state of affairs before Discovery stalked the island, and brought him to a new understanding of his position and its consequences. Alone in his beautiful gardens, whose terraces were so many cascades of flowers falling to the dangerous beach below, he could ask himself, when Jesse had left him, if it were possible to continue in this place at all, or if fatality must drive him hence. The very beauty of the house, its proud position as some fortress of an island kingdom, mocked his hopes and derided his intentions. For what friend would visit this citadel? Who would share its beauties with him? What solace would be found in its possession? In Paris, in New York, in Buenos Ayres he might start *de novo*, his fortune helping him, his brains re-establishing that authority for which he craved and of which punishment had deprived him. But here—on the rocky heights, with the wide sea all about him and the eternal solitude—what should a man achieve here and what impulse of folly had dictated such a purchase?

Candor, be it admitted, would have answered this impatience very readily. John Canning had come to Bell Island as a protest against the baseness of his aforetime friends, and as an affirmation of his resolution to triumph in spite of them. Here he had hoped to rest a while; to establish himself in the hearts of a simple people; to found a contented col-

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ony; to teach all the world that his old abilities had not deserted him. And in lieu of these things he had found, what? A pretty face, a pair of wistful eyes—a little peasant girl who climbed to the heights barefooted, and had just promised him not to forget.

She would not forget—this little girl of the raven locks—she would remember. In her he had an advocate against a score of frowsy fishermen who knew that he had been in prison. Pitiful in truth—grotesque in its humiliations—and yet the truth. And for her sake he could contemplate further residence upon the island, a new determination to win the affections of its people, a firm intention to teach them what kind of a man he was. Thus Candor in the garden—which he paced alone through the weary morning, and did not quit until the clock struck four. When he left it at last, an idea had come to him that he would ride out and learn the truth for himself.

Ay, what a knight then went forth, and yet how simple-minded a man, seeking here in this lonely hamlet just that very sympathy which London had denied to him! Canning would have laughed in the face of any man who had told him that he was anxious to know what old Abe Benson thought about it—or Bill Hunning, or Tom Weede—to say nothing of Japhon Fearney. Yet such was the

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truth—he must know. Vanity rode as surely down the lanes of Bell Island as it had stalked the purlieus of Threadneedle Street. He must know; he must hear the people for himself.

He crossed the downs and sought the old farmer first. Japhon was in the rickyard when his visitor rode up, but he came out immediately and received him at the gate, not insolently, but with the plain intimation that what was to be said were better said in the open.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Canning—I was not looking to see you here.”

“I suppose not—I came to speak about the letter—you received mine, Miss Jesse tells me.”

“Ay, and precious sorry I was to get it. This is bad news for all of us, Mr. Canning.”

“I can well imagine it—you are concerned for my welfare, no doubt.”

“God forbid that I should judge any man; but we must take things as they are. This is a simple place and does not understand great matters. I wish I knew what to say to the people—but I don’t. They’ll not take it kindly, I fear.”

“Ah, it would never do not to consider the people.”

“Just so—and I must consider my daughter’s good name. You won’t be asking her to your house or anything of that kind—not at present?”

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"Why do you qualify it? Is the future to make a difference?"

The old man looked at him shrewdly beneath his pursed brows.

"I don't say that it mightn't—that depends upon you. Win folks' kindly nature and they'll stand by you. It'll take a long time and mean some humbleness, but it can be done. There's a deeper story than any you've told me. I'll help you with it if you'll give me the chance."

"That's very good of you; what do you suggest?"

"That you go away a little while and leave me to think it all over. Make an end of your talk about building this, and improving that, and something will be done. They're an obstinate lot down yonder. I think you will find that they have the upper hand of you just at present and mean to use it."

"Oh, a menace. Well, we must see what can be done. I'll think it over, too; meanwhile rest assured about Miss Jesse. She won't be coming to the Castle."

"She'd better not. I'll teach her that. Whatever I may do, she'll have no hand in it—until I give her leave."

Canning smiled at the open threat, but he chose to ignore it. His desire to speak openly to this blunt old man vanished in the face of the insult—and he rode away, conscious of humiliation and of defeat.

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Here as in London the human instrument, different as might be its key, still harped this theme of exile and of flight. Just as old Sir Horace Gipps, the banker, had advised him to quit England, so this old farmer upon this remote island had no other counsel. And he began to ask if such were not words of wisdom after all. A new country would care little for his story—an alien people would not judge him as they judged him in this England of his hopes. What, then, forbade him to obey the voice of reason?

A pretty face—a pair of wistful eyes—a little peasant girl who had climbed to the heights barefooted and had told him that she would not forget! Here on the open down the truth confronted him once more. If he stayed upon Bell Island, it would be for Jesse's sake. If he still sought to conciliate these people, her faith bade him attempt the task. In a fine vision of success and triumph he saw himself triumphant in his island, as aforetime in the great city—the Castle resplendent, the island transformed, the people worshipping him. He would make a home here which others should envy—and having made it, would turn again to the fields he had deserted, to the scene of the *débâcle* which should become the theatre of his vindication.

It was a glorious afternoon, and might well have allured him to gentle thoughts. Far out to the west

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the ocean rolled in mighty grandeur, an infinite waste of blue water whose vast distances might be measured by the sails of ships and the black hulls of the passing steamers. The land itself was golden with the full ripe corn, the pastures still green, the broom a blaze of summer glory, the heather a feast of white and pink to gladden the eyes with all its suggestion of nature's solitudes and their bounty. Eastward, the shores of England stood out plainly in the radiant sunshine—you could espy the low shores about Westward Ho, and the very light-ships which marked the river; while down in the near hollow, the smoke from the cottages floated as a dream cloud above the little hamlet. Never had Canning looked upon a picture which suggested so rich a harmony of land and seascape, or could please more readily with all the changing phases of a natural and unspoiled beauty. But for men, he said, this would be Eldorado indeed—and he asked of how many scenes the same could be said, and reflected sadly that by man, and not by nature, came the misfortunes of the world.

So vain thoughts accompanied him down the dangerous bridle path from the heights to the hamlet, and thence to the winding village street and the purlieus of the harbor. His own launch had gone across to the mainland to take his friend, Ernest

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Hobby, back to his building—but there were two fishing boats at the mole, and a brig chartered by Japhon Fearney to bring the island coal. The latter gave employment to half a dozen of the younger men, who ceased to haul the baskets as Canning rode by, and watched him with that insolent curiosity whose meaning never can be mistaken. No man, however, said a word, and when he met Tom Weede, that worthy touched his hat with all the old respect; though, as he said at the “Jolly Admiral” afterward, “I were that took by surprise that I’d ha’ done it onthinkingly, though it were not to be undone arterward, surely, mates.” As for the women of the place, they curtsied with the same readiness as of old, and the whole passage would have been in some way a triumph but for Ned Hunning, the fisherman’s son, who, creeping behind the shelter of an old barrel on the beach, deliberately flung a stone at the rider and laughed when he had done it.

Canning heard the stone fall idly on the road before him, and turned as sharply as though a man had cut him with a whip. He could not see the lad who had flung the missile, nor was he aware whence it had come. For a moment he was ready to accuse the men at the windlass, and he rode a few paces back immediately, facing them angrily and asking what they meant. To this the reply was evasive.

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"We aren't throw'd no stones, guv'ner—what do 'ee talk about?"

Some one laughed, and a lout made a gesture which could not be mistaken. The guilty lad, seeing his opportunity, crept from his hiding place and went scudding along the beach, a great shout of laughter after him. Now, for a truth, the affair was ugly enough, and without another word to any one Canning rode at a canter from the village, straight up to the Castle gates, as though they had been the portals of sanctuary. Never in his life had he known such anger. That these mere brutes, the dregs of the village, the drunken loafers should be the chosen instrument! And he unable to punish them or to answer a single word. No insult could surpass that, no truth of the day convince him more quickly of the folly of all he had contrived. Either he or they must leave Bell Island, he said; and saying it, a voice of anger bade him hunt them out neck and crop, buy their cottages whatever the price, serve them wholesale with notice to quit, burn the very hamlet to the ground if need be. Was he not the master? Who should forbid him?

The thought took him quickly to his house. He would have no delays, and Abraham Wesson should be his instrument. The lawyer would not hesitate—he was just the fellow for this business, and would make a desert of the place if the fees were large

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enough. Canning began to perceive that salvation lay not in concession, but in action, not in an appeal for charity, but in the determination to do by these people as they had done by him.

And in that spirit he came up to the house, so full of his own thoughts that he saw nothing of the cruiser which had lately anchored in the eastern bay, or some of her crew—young Lieutenant Blake especially, who at that very moment was questioning Jesse, down in the cove where the beacon had been kindled upon the momentous night of his arrival at Bell Island.

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CHAPTER XXII

THE EFFIGY

THE news fell upon Bell Island as tidings of a woeful disaster. The people were to go from their homes which they and their forefathers had occupied through the centuries. No explanation was offered them, no grace allowed. The master of the Castle had decreed this thing, and go they must. But weekly tenants, for so the custom had been as long as any man could remember, they received from the solemn Wesson but a week's notice, and were to be gone within seven days, he said. Japhon Fearney remained alone in the pride of possession. He had bought his farm from the Morencys more than ten years ago—no stranger might turn him out.

And yet he quailed despite his advantage. These intervening weeks (for it was now the month of October) had been no weeks of triumph for him. In vain he tried to console himself with the thought that John Canning had been humbled to the dust, and he, Japhon, magnified accordingly. His exultation took no bit in its teeth nor went beyond a

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snail's pace. The shadow lay ever upon his house; he would listen the night through for the steps of the men who came to arrest him—the dawn found him ready to say that his fears were those of a child's imagination, and should never trouble him again. But the day did not bring him peace—the phantom never left him.

So tragic, too, that this should be the fruit of it, that all his words to Jesse and the islanders should thus ring hollow. How could he denounce his neighbor with any fervor when men might be denouncing him to-morrow?

How could he remind the child of her duty, when any day might leave her to be the mistress of her own acts, and the sole arbiter of her fortunes? Japhon, in truth, began to wonder if it would not be wiser to take Canning's part outright, to give him Jesse; and coming to his aid, to silence these malevolent tongues by the weight of his authority alone? But this was a mighty matter and not to be concluded lightly. Self-interest warred with pride and gained no victory.

Now, to be honest, the islanders would have been quick to forget Canning's misfortune if he had been wise enough to leave them a little while, and trust to time for his justification. Diversions of the harvest, but especially the passing and repassing of the war-ships then engaged in the famous *mæuvres* in the

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Channel and off the Irish coast, kept the people amused and stilled their tongues. They liked to have the Handy Men ashore in the few intervals of their leisure; it was something to see the officers go up to the farm and take a meal with that sour old curmudgeon, Japhon; and even if the same good fellows never went to the Castle, that fact would have won upon the people's sympathy in the end, but for Canning's unhappy act and its consequences.

"They won't bemean theirselves with such as 'ee," Tom Weede would say, and the others agreed; though, perhaps, the thought remained that Bell Island was disgraced by the fact, and that it would have been a better day had the Castle gates stood open at such an hour. No news of Canning's intentions had come to them nor had they heard further from the Castle, whose very servants were forbidden to set foot in the village, and whose courtyard remained as silent as the grave. Some believed that the master had already gone to England—others declared that he was about to go; none knew the truth in all its melancholy.

He had not left; he was still alone in the great house, from whose windows he could watch the warship in the bay and espy her officers going ashore. These men knew his story—it would be impossible that they should not; and, knowing it, his house must be anathema to them. No invita-

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tion did he dare to pen, no hope of their society entertain. Perchance, had they met him in London, it would have been different; but here, upon Bell Island, there could be no middle course. Ostracism, absolute and unmistakable—no knowledge that such a man as John Canning existed; no truck with him whatever.

It may be that these were foolish notions, and that he was unwise to torment himself about the matter. He knew that some of the officers had visited Japhon Fearney, and heard without particular interest that Jesse was the loadstar. This hardly troubled him. He had never been a jealous man, and he imagined no serious purpose of the incident. When they told him that Jesse had been seen many times with Lieutenant Blake, and that he had taken her out to visit the cruiser *Marathon*, he declined to believe the story, or half believing it, made allowance for gossip's multiples. What mattered it if the girl had gone? Should he put nun's veiling upon her because he might not ask her to be his wife? Better to believe the stories fables; better to shut his ears to them.

Herein he showed wisdom above that of his other acts. Jesse had, to be sure, seen much of Philip Blake, and this young man already had made love to her. A true sailor, he would have scoffed at the idea that a man should visit Fearney's farm with

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any other idea than that of making love to the pretty daughter; and would have been just as much amused if any one had spoken of marriage. The jest of a day, the episode in a busy life, the red rose snatched for the softness of his petals—here was Philip Blake's gospel. In her turn, Jesse was hardly conscious that he was making love to her at all. She listened to him because he could tell her tales of John Canning—honest tales unsuited by malice, and full of welcome truths.

"Know him?" Blake had said; "why, my old dad made pots out of him on the Stock Exchange. He used to be the cleverest of the lot of them—poor devil, we never thought he'd go under. But that's the luck of it. He wanted to be at the masthead before he'd learned to climb. Just like these chaps, Miss Fearney—they're worth twopence-halfpenny to-day, a million to-morrow, and the day after they're in prison. That was Canning's story—but I don't think any the worse of him, and I'd have gone up to his house if he'd asked me."

She was glad to hear it, and tried to learn from him how it was that Mr. Canning had come to such a place as Bell Island, and why the rest of the world did not treat him as this boy would have treated him. Here Philip Blake was at a loss; he could make but a bungle of a kindly philosophy learned from his own and not from the world's text books.

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"I suppose he hid some of his ill-gotten gains—these chaps generally do—and now he's spending them. He thought he'd be out of the way in this place—but a man is never out of the way when he has done seven years at Portland. That's a fact an Archbishop couldn't get over. We may be sorry for him, but what can we do? Our womenfolk won't look at him, and half the men turn their backs when he passes. If I'd have been Canning, I would have gone to South America. They don't care a dump there whether you've been in prison or out of it, and he could have made love to the Spanish women. What's the good of having money and shutting yourself up in a place like this? He might as well be in Pentonville. Now, don't you think so, Miss Jesse?"

She replied that she did not. The shame had spread a net over her also, and left her powerless to tell any human being all that she felt and dared to hope because of John Canning. Fidelity, staunch, staunch, unquestioning fidelity, predominated at the ruined shrine, and if she no longer worshiped, at least she might serve.

"I think that Mr. Canning was wise to come here, and I don't believe he has done any man a wrong," she said, and so she betrayed herself to this quick-witted man, who knew women the better because he had never made a study of them.

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"He's lucky in his friends, Miss Jesse—you'll have to introduce me."

"I! Oh, no; my father forbids me to go to his house."

"Of course he does—he's wise. Come, that would be a pretty thing, wouldn't it? You might meet some of his old friends from Portland. I wonder if they ever steal his spoons?"

"You will not win my friendship by jesting, Mr. Blake."

"Quite right to say that—I was a beast. And please don't think I wouldn't visit John Canning. He should see me there to-morrow if he'd send a line to ask me. I'd never jump on a man that's down, Miss Jesse. Some day I might be down myself."

"Why don't you call at the Castle without an invitation, Mr. Blake?"

"Ah, that wouldn't quite do. You see the circumstances are peculiar—he mightn't like it."

"I feel sure he would be very pleased."

"I'll go if you ask me."

"What have I to do with it?"

He laughed, with a sidelong glance at her.

"A good deal I should say—now haven't you? Tell me straight, haven't you a good deal to do with it, Miss Jesse?"

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She was very pale and serious, and by no means disposed to gratify his curiosity.

"I have as much to do with it as any friend of Mr. Canning's——"

"And as a friend may give him some good advice. I'd tell him to travel if I were you. What can a man do on a rock like this? Isn't the world open to him, just as it's open to any man who would lead a man's life?"

"Then women should not travel?"

"I don't say so. They ought to see the world as well as men. You have never traveled, I suppose. Think how much you have missed——"

"What have I missed?"

"Life, cities, art, music—everything which makes the world go round for brainy people. I'd like to show you the world some day—we might go to Paris to begin with. That's the place for girls. I never knew one of them yet who didn't like Paris. Now, honestly, wouldn't you like to see Paris?"

He meant much by the question, but it was lost upon Jesse, who had often traveled in her dreams and builded cities of her imagination in many a distant quarter of the globe. She did not understand that this man was a dangerous friend—far from it, she liked him for what he had said about John Canning and encouraged him, as did her

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father, to come to the farm. Japhon Fearney would have offered no opposition to such a marriage—it would have suited him very well that his daughter should be the wife of a naval officer.

And so the friendship ran on, and might have culminated in that visit to the Castle which Jesse so earnestly desired the lieutenant to make. Failure here must be set down to Canning's own deed, and especially to his threats against the islanders. A turbulent, independent race, they swore that the law must come armed to their doors ere they quitted the hamlet in which their lives had been spent. When entreaty and protest did not help them, they fell to open hostilities.

No man from the great house dared to show his face in the village street now. An attempt to fire the launch in which Canning crossed to the mainland was frustrated only by Japhon Fearney's intervention. Foiled in this, the wit of Frank Benson contrived an effigy, and they built in that very cove where they would have wrecked the Englishman on the night of his arrival a monstrous effigy, tarred and feathered and hoisted shoulder high upon a barrel. This they carried up the hill to the Castle gates, fired it triumphantly, and kindled a beacon in whose radiance every brick of the old house glowed red and brilliant through long hours of the night of brawling. Let the man come out

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and show himself—they would know how to deal with him.

Now, Jesse herself was a witness of this scene, for the bright light called her from the farmhouse about the hour of ten o'clock, and her father wisely feigning to know nothing of the business and keeping close to his bed—she ran across the down and stood upon a high place of the cliff to watch the riot out, and to pray silently for her lover's safety. A splendid night of autumn befriended her, and added the bewitching moonlight to the beacon's fiery glow. She could espy the *Marathon* lying at anchor under the lea of the eastern shore, the fishing boats over toward the mainland, the flowing sheen of the distant ocean, the Castle uprising as a citadel of her hopes. Creeping a little closer, half afraid of herself and the omens of the night, she began to name the men who were there assembled; the Bensons, the Hunnings, Jo, the nigger; Isaacson, the Swede; coal-begrimed sailors from the Tyne, the riffraff of Bell Island and of the smacks from the mainland. These howled like so many wild beasts, defying Canning to show himself. A little nearer still, step by step toward the scene, and she heard their threats more clearly. "Burn him out!" was now the cry. The devil of revenge had been loosed among the men, and they would have dared any mischief.

John Canning, pacing the Long Gallery alone,

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heard these cries and was not affrighted by them. Vainly his servants came to him from hour to hour and begged him to summon aid from the warship, or at the worst to escape by the garden gate down to the shore and to his yacht. He refused to budge an inch. "Go yourselves if your courage is not equal to it," he told his butler Mellish, and that worthy protested that untold gold would not buy him to do such a thing. Here the valet joined him; but the oath did not prevent the pair of them keeping the kitchen door wide open and preparing for flight incontinent should the occasion arise. Their master was mad, they said, to trifle with such a crew. The horrid shouts resounded through the vaulted chambers, as sallies from the throats of demons. And there was the object of them, as unconcerned as ever he had been in all his life, pacing the great room alone; smoking his cigar easily; even talking of taking the enemy by a flank movement and putting him to rout.

"How many of us are at home?" he asked Mellish. The fellow was too shocked to answer him without many a stammer and many a protest.

"At home, sir? God bless me, you wouldn't think of opposing of 'em, Mr. Canning? I'm sure, sir, I wouldn't do anything of that sort."

"I asked you how many men-servants were in the house, Mellish—please answer me."

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Mellish did not usually forget his aspirates, but they went by the board that night.

"Height, sir," he cried, "height in hall."

"Tell them to get any kind of weapon they can and to follow me—I am going to talk to the people, Mellish."

"My word, sir, I hope not; they're no better than raving madmen. Listen to 'em with your hown hears, Mr. Canning."

"I can hear perfectly, Mellish; now go and do what I tell you."

The butler went off, but did not soon return. Mutiny was abroad in the servants' hall, and opened a craven mouth to speak bitter words. Why should they obey such a master? Had he not been in prison? Why risk their lives for him? Certainly, they were not paid wages for that. Let them refuse to go; nay, more, let them hasten to quit a house where such requests were possible. Such a resolution was carried unanimously, but none dared to report it to John Canning. He rang the bell vainly—even the worthy Mellish had not the courage for such a job, and when he appeared at last, it was fear of his master prevailing above fear of the men which sent him to the Long Gallery.

"Just as I said, sir," he exclaimed, his face as white as the marble of the mantels; "not a man of 'em is willing to leave the females unprotected."

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"Won't go, eh, Mellish?"

"Beg your pardon, sir, there ain't none of 'em been in the army, and this is soldier's work."

Canning smiled. He had expected it—and perhaps he knew that these poor cravens were wiser than he. None the less he meant to go out and alone if none would follow him.

"Do you what you please, Mellish," he exclaimed. "I am going down to see what the trouble is about."

"God help us and save us, sir; they'll murder you."

"In which case you will see that the murderer is hanged. Now go to my dressing room—you will find a revolver in the little drawer upon the right-hand side of the dressing table; bring it to me and my hat."

The butler obeyed him, too terrified to protest further. He was a dreadful coward, but he stood at the front door while John Canning passed out and followed him with feeble steps across the inner courtyard to the great gate upon which the mob was beating. Here you walked in deep darkness—the blacker for the crimson glow upon the windows above; here you heard the resounding shouts and could estimate their ferocity. These madmen were as good as their word—they were trying to burn down the Castle gates that afterward the house it-

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self might hear the red cock crowing. But what was more odd was the fact that they fell to silence even as the gates were unbarred. You might have said that the very clatter of the bolts had put them to shame.

Canning threw the gate wide open, and immediately understood both the silence and its meaning. It is true that a belch of flame half blinded his eyes and that the heavy smoke of burning wood almost choked him upon the threshold, but the voice of the advocate was not to be mistaken. A child was contesting with the rabble, he said, and that child was Jesse Fearney. Oh, it was music to hear her voice, a very delight to watch her as she stood, the beacon's glow setting warm upon her angry face, the radiance of fire about her, the whole soul of her womanhood pleading with the men! And with what eloquence, with what naïve insistence upon their folly, with what appeals to their good sense and to their fear!

"Go back to your homes," she was crying; "oh, do you think you will not be punished for this? Are we murderers on Bell Island? Shame! shame!—must I, a girl, teach you your duty? Is there no man who thinks of to-morrow—none who has a home to save? Is this the way to seek favor?—I'll not believe it—you are not all cowards—there are men here. God send you grace to hear the

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truth—there are men among you—let them speak in the name of God.”

They cowered before her, drawing back from the fire they had kindled against the gate, and consulting one with the other in low tones. To be sure they were somewhat at a loss since that shrewd Plot-all, Frank Benson, had deserted them directly his work was done, and was now gone back to the hamlet to deplore their mad intentions. None the less they were ready to stammer a poor excuse; when what must happen but that the great gate flies open, the fire is flung to the winds, and the master himself stands accusing them. Now, for a truth, they were glad—for who would have dealings with a woman?

“What do you want here?” he asked them, striding across the fire-bespattered ground and facing the giant Bill Hunning, with a menace in every gesture; “what do you want here, men?”

An insolent laugh answered him. He heard Jesse as a man hears the voice of a dream, imploring him to go back, but he advanced the further because of it.

“Shall I tell you that this is a crime for which you can serve half your lives in prison?” he cried. “Do you wish me to send to the mainland to-morrow with a request for police? Madmen, do you know what it means?”

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Some one at the back cried out that he should know himself, seein' as "he'd been there afore," and the sally provoked a general shout of "Jail-bird! He's a jail-bird!" There is courage in many voices, and these men now found their courage. "Put him in the sea," cried the far from valorous Tom Weede, and the less eloquent Bill Hunning laid a hand upon the master's shoulder. An instant later the butt end of the revolver struck him to the ground, and he lay senseless and bleeding with none to pity him.

"Pick up that man," Canning roared. None obeyed him but Jesse, who sprang in between and knelt at the ruffian's side. A mere girl now seemed the arbiter of life and death—they must trample upon her to get at Canning's throat—the wolves primed to tear him to pieces when the first of the wolves should leap.

"Back!" she cried; and then, "Will none help me? Will none help his comrade? Mr. Benson, Tom Weede—yes, yes, I see you both—will you not help me? Are you mad that you stand there and do nothing?"

They responded with shamed laughs. The others, driven desperate by the blow and their own restraint, did not cease for a moment to cry "Jail-bird!" and upon that the foulest oaths; while John Canning stood as a figure of marble, the pistol

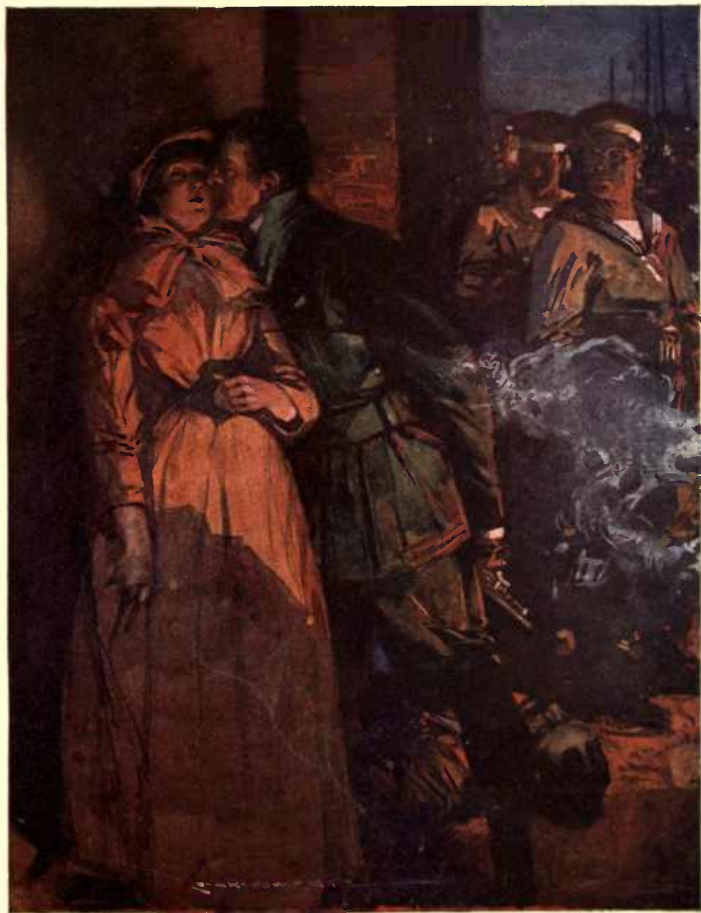
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raised, the ear intent. When they leaped upon him at last he did not fire—his eyes were still upon the girl's face—the vision still fascinated him.

They fell upon him like ravening wolves, over Jesse's prostrate body, fighting with each other to get at the hated throat. But with them and among them came twenty of the *Marathon's* crew, summoned from the ship by the glare of the beacon and firmly believing the Castle to be on fire.

Ay, a merry bout for the Handy Man, and one in which he delighted. Devil a chance for raving fishermen now, or for any coal-heaver that ever sailed from Tyne. Jack was among them like a merry policeman at an Irish fair. Down they went headlong—some fled incontinent; others bawled like women—a few were burned by the very fire they had kindled, and cried as children at the pain of it.

But John Canning stood unharmed through it all, and stooping, as the sailors closed about him, he caught Jesse in his arms and kissed her burning lips.



STOOPING, AS THE SAILORS CLOSED ABOUT HIM, HE
CAUGHT JESSE IN HIS ARMS AND KISSED HER LIPS

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CHAPTER XXIII

A SHIP OF SHADOWS

JAPHON had not suspected his daughter's absence from the house, and when he heard of it from Hannah, the maid, very early in the morning, his first thoughts were entirely selfish and appertaining to his own position in the matter.

He had known well enough that mischief was in the air, but the nature of the mischief he had not discovered. Perhaps a firm belief in the cowardice of the population of Bell Island disarmed a fear of real violence. The riffraff might carry an effigy up to the Castle and shout itself hoarse there, while they burned it, but no overt act would be committed. He was not sorry to see John Canning humbled; and humiliation would make the fellow more pliable. So he slept upon it, determined to know nothing until the need arose. Let the morrow tell its own tale—he would prove a ready listener.

And what a tale it was!—of riot and tumult, of fire and burning, of a mob maddened to mad acts, of the King's sailors called from their sleep to intervene. But more amazing still, a tale of Jesse's absence and of the story of her deed. Oh, now, be

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sure the old man was aflame. His daughter to have been where duty should have sent him—the law upheld, not by the King's magistrate, but by a mere girl. And she absent from her home in defiance of her father—lodged at the very Castle which he had forbidden her to enter. In truth the supreme humiliation; the final scene in this drama of disgrace.

Japhon had risen at six o'clock according to his custom, and Hannah, the maid, at once brought him the amazing tidings. A visit some two hours later to the harbor and the village afforded him but meagre satisfaction. Few but women were about at such an hour. The fishermen, thoroughly ashamed of themselves, had put to sea, and their boats already stood upon a southward course, making for the open ocean or the Scillies. Such strangers as helped to haul the coal from the "foreign" brig laughed when he questioned them, and pretended to know nothing of what had happened. "A bad business up at the great house—na, lad, what dost thee clatter aboot?" they asked him, and he had no evidence to bring against them. When he left them, just such a volley of insolent laughter followed him as had put John Canning to shame yesterday. These oafs had nothing to lose. They did not care a straw for any King's magistrate in the three kingdoms.

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Some of the women, to be sure, were more eloquent. They deplored what had been done, and were more wistful about the consequences. Mr. Fearney, they said, should make it his business to tell the master that the poor fellows were not themselves to do such a thing. They had been maddened by the threat and were not responsible. Let some one go up to the Castle and humbly beg pardon—a suggestion which Japhon received with an oath. Was he the man to be the minister of apology? He would have struck any man who had asked him as much.

“Your husbands are a pack of fools,” he snapped; “they deserve what they are going to get. I’ll say nothing for them; let them make their own excuses. What, to burn a man out of his house and then say they didn’t mean it! I’ll hear no such nonsense.”

The attitude was necessary and he must persist in it. As the resident magistrate upon Bell Island much of the responsibility for last night’s work must fall upon his shoulders—so unwilling to bear responsibility at such a time. For the women’s tears he cared not at all. All his interest lay in an attempt to excuse himself before John Canning, and to put the blame on other shoulders. This might not be difficult. The threats of eviction would win sympathy in England—he, the magistrate, must know nothing of sympathy but only of the law.

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And so he returned to the farm to find Jesse there, and to be confronted immediately by the true story of the night. That interview between father and daughter was one of the most solemn in Japhon's story. A man of rugged courage in common affairs, he shrank before this pale, determined face, could not look boldly into the accusing eyes of the girl, who met him in the porch, and told him in a few simple words where she had been, and what she had done.

"I saw the fire kindled, and I went across the down to see what they were doing, father. They meant to burn the house down, and would have done it but for Mr. Blake and the sailors. Mr. Canning says that I saved his life, but I don't think that is true. He would not let me leave the house until he knew that it was safe for me to go. I could not come before, father—I am sorry if you are angry—but I could not come."

Japhon strode into the house, brushing by her rudely and bidding her follow him. In the little parlor, when he had shut the door and locked it, he pulled a vast watch from his fob pocket and showed her the time.

"Do you see that, girl—ten o'clock of the morning? Now, answer me a plain question. What were you doing in this man's house until ten o'clock of the morning?"

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"I was asking him to spare the people, father."

"To spare the people! God in heaven, is that the tale?"

"It is true, father. I have asked Mr. Canning to let the poor folk have their cottages, and he has consented to do so."

"You asked him—you—and he consented?"

"He has promised me that if they will behave themselves, he will not send them away. We must see that they do so, we must tell them, you and I, father."

"A likely story; and for that you left my house against my orders and went to this man's door? Well, suppose I show you mine to-day—will he take you back again, will he harbor such a woman? Go you and ask him and see what he says."

She shrank at the word, shrank as though he had struck her a blow.

"If I leave your house," she said quietly, "it will not be to go to Mr. Canning, or ever to return to you again as long as I am alive."

"Ay, ay, the old story—I've done you a wrong—been a bad father to you—I know it all—heard it from your mother many a time. Now I'll ask you this, do you mean to marry this man or don't you—and marrying him do you understand what you're doing? I want to know that, Jesse—it's my duty to know it. Do you mean to marry him?"

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"I do not, father—marriage with Mr. Canning is out of the question. He has told me so."

"Oh, then you've talked it over, I see. And that's the man in whose house you've been since midnight yesterday—God in heaven, that I must listen to you."

Jesse sat down quietly in a seat by the window and folded her hands upon her lap.

"You do not know what you are saying, father, or I would leave you at once. Mr. Canning will not marry me because he thinks it would be wrong to do so—but I would marry him to-day if he asked me. I went to his house to do what you should have done—you know it, and will be glad because I went. But I shall never forgive you for what you have said to me to-day, and I shall leave your house upon the first opportunity."

"Leave me! Ah, we'll see about that! Perhaps I'll teach you both a lesson before you get as far. Now go to your room, girl—do you hear me?—get to your bedroom and leave it when I bid you. If you don't, as sure as there's a God in heaven, I'll lay my whip on your shoulders."

She rose immediately, but did not answer a single word, while he opened the door and followed her up the narrow stairs to her bedroom above, locking her in with his own hands and thrusting the key into a capacious pocket. For the time being Japhon

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Fearney had lost touch both with common sense and with common prudence. Full well he knew that every spoken word had been a crime against truth and against his child. There had been nothing wrong in her visit to the Castle. Chagrin and bitter disappointment were at the back of all his accusations. That this salvation for the islanders should come by Jesse's hands; that he, Japhon, should have no part in it—above all that the separation between the two houses should be final and irrevocable—there was a pretty day's work! And be sure he understood that John Canning was not the man to keep such a secret as this. Would he not tell all the world, "I have spared the people for Jesse Fearney's sake?" Of course he would. And they would be at Jesse's feet in consequence—while he, Japhon, must win nothing but their contempt—and if he held them to account for last night's work, their overt anger. He could see no alternative—the more he thought upon it the wilder his anger became, the more unreasonable his persistency.

Should he see John Canning for himself and endeavor to come to a better understanding? He pondered this long during the day, arriving at no settled resolution until sundown, and then but half determined in his purpose. If he offered this man Jesse to wife, the concession might make an end of

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all their difficulties. And why not? Did he, Japhon, really care, he who stood on the brink of prison himself? Why had he paid so much heed to the fisherfolk and their prejudices? Fool, fool—he said—and, upon this, asked himself the question, Is it yet too late? He would go to the Castle and have it out with John Canning. He could beg Jesse's pardon afterward, when he came to tell her what he had done. That, surely, would be good news—for he did not doubt that she loved the Englishman and would marry no other.

So it befell that, with no word to his daughter at all, he took up his hat about six o'clock of the evening, and set out across the down toward the heights and the Castle gate. The sun had just set over the ocean then, but the sky was afire with a rich afterglow, which had the shape of a mighty baldachino uplifted above the eternal altar of the universe—a heaven of radiance and of spreading lights, which declared the ships beneath as flecks of white upon an unbroken waste of golden waters. Westward it was nearly dark, and there were lights already at the pier head, and in some of the cottages; but Japhon took little notice of these, or, if he espied them, reflected sadly upon his next appearance among the people and the humiliations which must attend it. As he drew nearer to the Castle

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gate, he was surprised to discover the whole building plunged in profound darkness; and when at length he rang the great bell, the evidences of last night's work confronted him all too plainly. Yes, there had been madness here, and some one would have to give a fair account of it—for he was not willing to accept Jesse's account, nor could he believe that such a man as John Canning would forgive the people so readily.

Now old Martin answered the bell, and he answered it shyly—opening the wicket first and asking in a rasping voice, "Who is it?" When Japhon replied, curtly and with the voice of authority, he did not find the old man ready to bend the knee to him or to pay him any civility whatsoever.

"Ay, it be Mr. Fearney all right. Well, master, we were wanting you last night. 'Tain't like Japhon Fearney to be one day after the fair, surely?"

"Hold your tongue, man—I didn't come here for your opinions."

"Ay, but you'll get 'em all the same, Mr. Fearney—there ain't no law as I knows on which jumps at a man's head for his opinions. You've been a precious sight of time coming, I must say, and now you be come, there won't be many to cry their eyes out over it. Is it anything I can do for ye, Mr.

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Fearney? Don't you mind asking me, because I shan't mind answerin' you—so there'll be no bad blood between us."

"I wish to speak to your master—to Mr. Canning. Go you and tell him that I am at the door."

"Then I'll be wanting a boat, Mr. Fearney. Master's gone to Lunnon—you'd have seen his yacht in the Strait if you'd eyes in your head—gone to London with the flood. You'd better be writing him, Mr. Fearney. You're a wonder at the writing as all the island knows."

Japhon turned away with a snarl. What a fool he had been to come at all—and how blind! Sure enough, as he went down the hillside, he made out the yacht's lanterns creeping in a black wake to the mainland and obscurity, and he understood in a flash that all his fine house of cards was down, and that nothing but a miracle would rebuild it.

Ay, who would summon John Canning to Bell Island again? What hope would bring such a man to such a place? Had he not come here to escape a censorious world, and had not a miniature of that world received him? Even a woman's love would not prevail against that chivalry with which Japhon Fearney could accredit him now. He had gone from Jesse and her people, not because he believed himself unworthy of her affections, but because he

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knew that the world had stamped him as unworthy. And here Japhon perceived the strength and intent of sacrifice, and could bow the knee to it. How far above his own puny schemes was all this, how alien from his own modes of thought and feeling! He would have cared nothing for the world's opinion, he said, and yet, in truth, he had never cared so much.

He watched the disappearing steamer, and it seemed to him as though the years of his finer manhood were carried away in some phantom ship, to leave him old and broken and decrepit. What story could he carry to Jesse now? What had he to offer her in this hour of her tribulation? Could he tell her that he had gone to the Castle for her sake, humiliated himself at her nod? Candor, defying him, laughed at the fabrication and whispered a truer word in his ear. Candor also bade him look seaward once more, and ask himself what ship it was which now made for the harbor, and would put its passengers ashore before half an hour had passed. This was no boat from Canning's yacht surely—nay, it was a little lugger whose shape was as well known to Japhon Fearney as that of his own lugger.

"Holly Angus' boat," he said, and saying it he began to shiver as a man with an ague.

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For what new portent of disaster was this—what news to drive the blood from his face and send him headlong toward the farm—a trembling old man about whose path the shadows of disaster were closing?

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CHAPTER XXIV

THE MESSENGER

THE lugger put into the northern cove, steered by one who knew Bell Island and the channels about it. There were but two aboard the little boat and one was a slim lad, not much more than eighteen years of age. He, however, appeared to be the master, and giving curt directions to the other, an old boatman from Bideford, he set out at once for the farm and was closeted with Japhon Fearney before half an hour had passed.

Now this was a strange interview, a sorry chapter of a swift drama such as Japhon Fearney with all his apprehensions had never believed that he would be called upon to take part in. For who was this slip of a lad but young Willie Snarth, the son of Holly Angus' aforetime partner, and now a clerk in that very office at Barnstaple which Japhon had visited so stealthily? And what other object had he but to speak of great happenings; but chiefly of an arrest and its sequel—and of all that sequel might mean to the agitated old man before him? This he

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told in a few words—a boy's words, plain and outspoken, but very sensitive to the opportunities.

"I came at once, Mr. Fearney—you should know before all others. They arrested Mr. Angus at three o'clock this afternoon. Lucky the wind was right or I wouldn't be here now. I tell you it has been a dreadful day for me."

Japhon gasped for something, he knew not what. His hands were shaking so that he feared even to help himself to brandy from the decanter in the sideboard.

"They arrested Mr. Angus? Good God, lad! are you dreaming? What have they arrested him for?"

"For smuggling saccharin into England—that's the first charge, Mr. Fearney, but there are others."

"Others—what others?"

Here was an honest question. Japhon knew perfectly well that the charge would be for smuggling saccharin into England, but that there should be others amazed him.

"Oh, it's difficult to tell you, Mr. Fearney. But I think it's a question of bills and fraud."

"What bills has he been doin' then—what need was there for such as him to defraud anybody? You're speaking truth, lad—eh, you've not come here to fool me?"

"Oh, Mr. Fearney, why should I do that? Have

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I anything to gain by it? I came because I thought I ought to do so—I came to warn you.”

“Me—do they say I’ve been doing bills, then? Is that the tale? God in heaven, what next?”

Young Snarth settled comfortably in his chair and watched the old man, who now threw all disguise to the winds, and going with tottering steps to the sideboard, mixed himself a stiff glass of brandy and water and drank it at a gulp. Here was a battle between youth and age, a battle of argle-bargle and cunning—and the lad was to win all the way.

“They say that you were Mr. Angus’ partner, Mr. Fearney. I know it because my brother is a great friend of Inspector Bent and had it from him. They say that you were a partner in the firm, and that a deed has been found to prove it.”

“It’s a lie—a black lie.”

“Oh, I beg your pardon—you forget that I was a clerk in the office.”

“Then you’ve been spying on us—d—n you, you’ve been spying on us. What I put my name to was a document that we went partners in the stuff which came ashore. You know it, young Snarth—why do you stand there telling me those lies?—you know I was not his partner?”

“Indeed, I know very little, sir. Of course I had some idea that your boats were bringing in sac-

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charin and that you were making a great deal of money by it, but what your arrangement was with Mr. Angus, I didn't know at all—upon my word and honor, I did not."

Japhon stood to wipe his brow—his thoughts came and went as a surge of terror and apprehension upon which all right reason was to be wrecked. He knew not what to say. Had this lad come to him with the simple story of the smuggled saccharin, he might, at least, have played a creditable part—but this darker story, this woeful menace, how should he answer that? He knew not—his protests were not renewed and his voice dropped to a mere whisper.

"At what time do you say they arrested Mr. Angus?"

"About three o'clock."

"Did they mention my name then?"

"No, sir—not then—but my brother says they are coming for you to-night."

"Let them come—I shall have my answer—let them tell what lies they please—I shall know how to defend myself."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Fearney; but Inspector Bent thinks you have no defence."

"He would say that—the police always say it. I must leave this place, lad—I must get away—to England."

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"I think so, Mr. Fearney—you would be very wise to go while you have time. If you trust to me, I will help you."

"You, lad—what can you do for me?"

"I can show you how to get to France to-night—there's just time if you will go—but, of course, I shall want money."

Japhon looked up swiftly. Money! Had this mere lad come here to blackmail him then? Then all his avaricious instinct was awakened in an instant. Money! Must he buy a fool's tale and repent it afterward? Oh, be sure 'twould need a clever fellow to get money out of him.

"You want money, boy—did you come here for that?"

"Yes, sir. Why should I come otherwise? I have something to sell to you and I want money for it."

"You are a clever lad—I should have remembered what such as Holly Angus would have taught you—how much money do you want?"

"A hundred pounds, sir."

"Suppose you're telling me a lie—suppose it's all wrong—what then?"

"It is not a lie—it's the only way you can escape the police. Please answer me quickly—there is no time to lose."

"Tell me what you know, and I will give you the money afterward."

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"Oh, indeed, no—I am a little sharper than that, Mr. Fearney."

"Well, I warn you—if it's false, I'll have it back from you—as the Lord hears me I'll do you an injury if you're fooling me."

"You shall be the judge of that afterward, Mr. Fearney—come, please be quick or I shall go."

"Do you think I carry that much money about in my hat? You're little better than a fool. Be patient—I'll deal fairly by you."

He shuffled about the room, tortured by the dilemma, as unwilling to pay this tribute as any miser whom danger had enveloped. All his reason said the youth was honest—all his desire would have made him out to be a liar.

"There's a hundred pound in banknotes there; now tell me what you have to say."

"I beg your pardon—there are just sixty pounds here."

"D—n you, will you have my life's blood—I'll not hear a word—give me my money!"

"Very well, Mr. Fearney—there it is."

Snarth tossed the notes upon the table and took up his hat. He knew full well that the man would not let him go, and was not mistaken. With a howl of rage and real misery, Fearney tossed a further roll of notes upon the table.

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"Speak," he cried—"speak before I do you a mischief."

Snarth picked up the banknotes, rolled them up, and thrust them into his breast pocket. Then he spoke, slowly and with emphasis.

"The Count will lie off the Galland Rock for twenty-four hours from noon to-morrow. We cabled him the day before yesterday, and had an answer last night. The code says twenty-four hours, just inside the twenty-fathom line—I read it myself."

Japhon stood quite still to hear the message, and for some minutes after it was spoken. These two had been talking most of the time in the dark, and not so much as a candle had been kindled until the money was fetched. Its light flickered upon strange faces—that of a boy who had no fear, and of a man who feared greatly, but had just been taught to temper fear by hope. In a twinkling now, Japhon understood why young Snarth had come to him and the extent of the service he had done. A hundred pounds—he would have paid five for such tidings.

"Then Angus meant to show 'em a clean pair of heels, eh?" he asked presently.

Snarth said that it was so.

"And Count Gabriel is waiting for him off Gal-

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land Rock. They would have run for the Scheldt, I suppose?"

"I cannot tell you that, Mr. Fearney. But the Count is clever. Once aboard his launch you won't need to think twice about Mr. Moss. But you'll see that there isn't much time to lose."

"Are they watching in the Channel, think you?"

"I cannot tell you—I saw nothing as we came across."

"I could stop in Belgium a while and make my position clear. I'm no partner of Angus'—the trial will make that plain. Let 'em fine me a thousand for getting the saccharin in if they like. I shan't be called upon to pay it in Belgium."

"Then I advise you to put to sea at once. For myself I must get back—it would never do for them to miss me, Mr. Fearney."

"Go as you say, lad—and keep the money. I'll never ask you for that again."

Snarth replied that he supposed not. He had got what he wanted and had no cause to linger. Their parting was commonplace and abrupt. This old man, with all his fears and his uncouth gestures and the terror which animated every movement, affrighted the mere lad who had come there to save him. Snarth hardly breathed freely until he gained the creek and the open sea. Yes, it had been a clever move and he did not care twopence now what

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became of Japhon Fearney. The hundred pounds were safe in his pocket—a lad of eighteen can do much with a hundred pounds.

And so he hoisted sail, and getting by the dangerous reef, stood out for the mainland and the river. The night had fallen black, dark and moonless, and the wind was blowing half a gale already. He espied few ships upon the hither waters; none which he suspected. Whatever the authorities had learned about Japhon Fearney, this was not the night for it to be declared.

“The old rogue will get across,” Snarth said to himself; “will he take his daughter with him?”

And that, oddly enough, was the very question which Japhon asked himself at that very moment.

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CHAPTER XXV

JAPHON SAILS FOR HOLLAND

JAPHON closed the door upon Willie Snarth and stood for a little while in the hall, debating what he should do. The evidences of a night of wind and rising sea, which he had espied from the shelter of the porch, cheered the man and put heart into him. He was a fine sailor and feared neither storm nor tempest. The keen northwesterly breeze, freshening every instant, would help his flight—for upon flight he was determined.

Stealthily and with chosen steps, he re-entered the parlor and began to search his bureau. Compromising papers he did not fear. His native shrewdness had always dreaded correspondence, and he preferred at any time to sail across to the mainland rather than to write a letter. None the less there were certain documents—his will, the title deeds of the farm, but above all his store of greasy bank-notes, hoarded against such an emergency as this, which claimed his first attention. These he scrutinized carefully, and setting twenty pounds of the

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money apart, he rolled the notes in an oilskin bag and thrust them into his pocket.

What should he say to Jesse? This had been in his mind from the first, though his own condition and its perils made light of the lesser responsibility. Like all guilty men, Japhon believed that he would be absent from his home but a little while; that he would return in some way vindicated, and that all his affairs must be regulated upon that belief. So now it seemed a lighter thing to frame excuses. He was called to Holland on urgent business. Jesse must manage the place while he was away, look after the farm and the hands—make herself mistress in the master's absence. The very words of it were mumbled as he moved from room to room, packing a few shabby clothes here, getting his great-coat there—poking into empty drawers; trying to think of a hundred things, but thinking of none save those which concerned flight. Had not the lad reminded him that the time was short? Good God! they might come for him at any hour.

He listened to every sound, to the moan of the wind about the farm; to the footsteps of the girl who moved furtively about the kitchen; even to the beating of his own heart. Now, for a truth, this interview with Jesse began to appear a formidable thing. What a fool he had been to speak so harshly to the girl! She was not one to be won by hard

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words, and well he knew how small is their worth when women are concerned, for her mother had taught him the lesson. Much better to have been discreet, as prudence had prompted him to be. He must pay the penalty for that outbreak, abase himself and crave forgiveness. Well, well, that was a bitter night, and lamentations upon past acts would not make it better.

He took a candle and crept up the narrow stairs, pausing often to choose his words, and yet conscious of the need of haste. A gentle knock upon the heavy oak door obtaining no answer, he beat loudly for a reply—for his fears already alarmed him and permitted him to guess the worst.

“Jesse—I’m coming in to see you, girl—I must have a word before I go.” It would prepare her, he thought, to speak of departure, and he laid emphasis upon the word. When the effort proved vain, he unlocked the door clumsily and raised the candle high to peer within. There was no one there. Not at the first or even at the second glance would he believe the truth; but he came to believe it presently, and stumbling from the place, his brain on fire, his lips shaping unspoken words, he said that Jesse had done as he dared her to do and had left his house.

Oh, be sure, this was the crowning hour of that night of misfortunes. Whatever his sins, Japhon

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Fearney loved his daughter—loved her with that uncouth affection which pays no tribute in words, but many in deeds; which is rarely remembered, but ever present—an affection brutelike in its elementary virtues, but not wholly selfish at its source. And she had deserted him—he must leave his home without one word to the child he loved; without even the knowledge that his anger had earned no graver penalty than her flight. How if she had killed herself? It might even be that, he said, as he staggered into the kitchen and began to question the terror-stricken maid. She might have left him, not for the hour, but forever. Jesse came of a headstrong race—who would answer for her in a moment of hysteria which injustice had provoked?

“Have you seen Miss Jesse?”

“Oh, master, master——”

“Have you seen her. I ask? Don’t lie to me, I will be answered.”

“She left the house an hour ago, sir—I heard her—I think it was Mr. Blake who took her.”

“You think—slut. Did I not bid you tell me what happened?”

“I couldn’t, sir—I couldn’t say a word against Miss Jesse.”

“Who’s asking you that? Hold your tongue and wipe your eyes. I’m going away, Hannah—I must go away to-night now—I’ll be away a week; per-

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haps a month. Let Miss Jesse understand that—perhaps a month.”

The girl ceased to cry, and regarded him with open eyes.

“You going away, master? Oh, Miss Jesse will be surprised to hear that.”

“I shall write a letter to her. See that she has it directly she comes back—do you hear? Miss Jesse, and no other. If any one comes from the mainland, you don’t know where I am—eh, girl, have you the sense to understand that?—you don’t know where I am or when I shall be back.”

“Oh, master—how strange you talk to-night. Of course I understand it.”

“Then hold your tongue and I’ll give you a sovereign when I come home—eh, Hannah?—that’s something you can make head and tail of—a sovereign when I come home.”

He jested as a man who has lost all and abandoned himself to anything that fortune may have to send him. Jesse’s flight did not trouble him now. She had gone off with that sailor lad—well, she must be her own protector henceforth—and after all, the day comes sooner or later when every man’s daughter must be the arbiter of her honor and her fortunes. If the truth must be told, Japhon was pleased with what Hannah had to tell him. He

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could leave without let or hindrance now, and ten minutes had not passed before he was out on the down with his bundle; a bent old man whose heart warmed to the spirit of the contest; whose courage rose as his difficulties accumulated.

It had been a merry game and this was the end of it. Three years ago that clever rogue, Holly Angus, learned by chance that the profits on smuggled saccharin are fifty-fold those upon any other possible commodity. He got in touch with Count Gabriel Lacombe, of Antwerp, and with Japhon Fearney, of Bell Island. They brought the stuff from Antwerp by steamer, and shipped it in small quantities upon one of Japhon's boats—taking advantage of black nights and of the old farmer's honest reputation. He would hide the stuff and get it into Barnstaple, a hundred tricks helping him. Often it went nested in trusses of hay; sometimes it would come in the machinery of husbandry, sent over nominally for repairs, but in reality to carry saccharin. Old pianos, bureaus, even common traveling bags, were employed in a similar service, for who would suspect old Japhon, and why should the Devon Customs be associating him with such a rare commodity? Possibly, if they thought about it at all, they would have said that he did not know the meaning of the word. And he and Angus were

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laughing in their sleeves all the time, making hundreds at the business, defying the risks of extreme penalties and of prison.

And now it was all done with, and that very Count Gabriel, whose ship had so often run the stuff over from Holland, came once more upon a work of mercy. This had been his promise from the beginning. "If anything goes wrong," he had said, "I will hide you all in Belgium until the storm blows over—and you can make your peace with the police afterward." This promise he was about to keep as his message bore witness; and if Japhon admitted that neither he nor Angus would have kept it, he could yet say, nevertheless, that the Count was a man of honor.

"I'll lie a month in Belgium while old Lawyer Harper works for me," he argued. "If Angus goes to penal servitude, that's no reason why I should. They can't prove that I was his partner, and if they do they can't say I had any of the money. A month should see me safe, and after that I can begin to think of life at home again. This'll blow over if it's managed properly. They'll forgive me for the stuff if I can prove to 'em I'm honest."

He liked the reasoning, and it was shrewd. Bell Island would overloom the lesser offence if the greater were not brought home to him. Perhaps

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Japhon himself did not quite understand how inextricably his affairs were mixed up with those of Holly Angus, and how sure were the prospects of conviction. He had not had any of the baser money, it is true—but that was a fact even his own lawyer could not prove; and, failing proof, an adverse verdict was assured. If he fled to-night, he fled because of uncertainty and for a reason equally potent. The supreme dread of his life had been the Law, its meshes, its costs, its dangers. Prison stood to him for an unnamable infamy, a place where men were starved and flogged and crushed. And from prison he was flying—out to the darkness of the sea, and to those unknown waters which stood to this ignorant old man for the very fables of the half-decked boat, small and handy and familiar. It was the work of a few moments to warp her from her moorings and get her into the open channel. He would carry no lights nor trouble about provisions, but he took a great flask of rum and put a flare into the boat in case there should be the need to signal. A rising sea delighted him, and he promised himself a swift run to the Galland Rock and the security of the Count's launch. Once aboard that he might laugh at these stories of policemen and of prisons, laugh at what the world might say of him, go his way among a strange people, unknown and unremembered. In truth, the very ex-

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citements of it were a fine mental tonic to a man who had spent the best part of his life upon that lonely island, and knew the world no better than any ancient philosopher drumming a theorem in an anchorite's cell.

He warped his boat into the Channel, we say, and thence to the open sea. The island protecting him from the dangerous northwesterly wind, the first beginnings of his voyage were altogether to a sailor's liking, for he ran almost before the steady breeze, straight down the length of Bell Island to the great lighthouse at its southern extremity. There was no revenue boat here. Well he knew the shape of them; often had his old eyes searched them out when Jo, the nigger, and Isaacson, the Swede, were blind to any sight but those which years had made familiar to them. And to-night the sea was almost destitute of ships—for the fishing boats had rounded the headland for safety, or were once more ensconced in their own welcome harbor. Japhon reflected that no revenue cutter would look for work upon such a night, and pluming himself upon security, he came at length to the headland and the open sea—and then he understood in an instant the perils he had invited.

Ay, to be sure this was no landsman's breeze—this no night even for such a venture. How the great rollers surged in toward the distant mainland!

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How they thundered already upon the fateful reefs! Darkness above and darkness below—the weird voices of storm calling him as with a witchery of sirens; the wind roaring in the joy of tempest and holocaust—and upon it all that sense of despair, of remoteness from a human aid which is the sailor's direst experience. Japhon was a master of seamanship, but never did he remember being afloat upon such a night in such a ship, or even venturing beyond the Pharos when the dreaded northwesterly winds were blowing half a gale. And this was tempest, risen with tempestuous treachery, a storm which would be remembered in the annals; a thing for fathers to tell their children in the years which should come after.

He had a good courage, this dour old man flying from unknown perils, and it did not desert him in this hour. If there were moments when he contemplated surrender to necessity, and an attempt to regain the harbor or the cove, more sober reasoning told him that such return was impossible, and that even the river and the mainland were beyond his hopes in such a gale. Even if it were done, the greater peril stood there, for what kind of a figure would he cut walking the streets of Barnstaple, and what would the police have to say to him at such a time? Arrest upon suspicion could be the lightest of the penalties, and after arrest, the trial, and, it

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might be, the judgment. Japhon determined that whatever befell him here on the open sea, his fate must be kinder than any which could await him on shore. And this thought inspired him in the darkest hour. He would run south before the gale, and trust to pick up the Count's yacht before the tempest drove him to harborage. Vain delusion! They were already signaling his predicament from the lighthouse, and the rockets at the pierhead were calling the lifeboat from the mainland.

Japhon saw the rockets cleaving the black sky and tumbling with a long-drawn hiss into the spume above the southern rocks. For a little while, he did not understand that his own peril prompted the men, and that he was responsible for the wailing blasts now set up by the siren upon Bell Island, or for that answering light from the river's mouth, which signaled the departure of the lifeboat. When he did so, when at last the truth came home to him, the very irony of it appalled him as though it were a judgment of Almighty God. To be taken thus in the very act of flight—to be dragged from the harboring seas to this light of exposure and of ridicule. Better death itself, he said, and none the less shrank from death with all the horror which a simple faith had nurtured through the years.

Here upon the ocean he could fight his battles alone, peer up to the blackened heaven and pray for

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forgiveness—but over there, amid the lights and the faces of men, with the finger of scorn pointed at him, what hope for him was to be found there? Despair answered none. He watched the trail of the rockets as though the very fire must search out hidden infamies. Not a guilty man in the graver sense, conscious but of vague offences, he could complain of the destiny which put these imagined charges upon him, swear to Heaven that he knew nothing of Angus' wrongdoings and was unable to bear a new burden of suspicion and of peril. Better by far that the end should be here, amid the black waters, with the drone of the surges in his ears—better that the sea engulf him than that men should say, this was the night when they took Japhon Fearney, the felon.

He battled with the thought, rocked in the hard cradle of temptation. It was one thing to boast a resolution, another to battle with these monstrous waves which cast up the boat high amid showers of blinding spindrift, or hurled it headlong into the turbulent abyss. Let his courage be what it might, the voice of ocean could yet appall it, shrieking with maddened youth, and belaboring his ship until every timber yawned and the cabin was aflood. Again and again must he lie head to the gale, to cheat the whirlwind of waters racing after him in mocking majesty, or boiling about the trembling ship until

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her very shape was lost in their embrace. The bitter cold, the dank air stupefied his brain and paralyzed his limbs. He watched the rockets as they soared in lines of crimson fire, and began to think that deliverance were better at any price. Lights upon a distant horizon—the lights of the tug which towed the lifeboat from her moorings—spoke of shelter and warmth and security. And he was an old, old man—grown older in this brief hour of judgment and the penalty. His debt was paid, he said. Come what would, the Almighty had dealt with him, and man's reckoning must be of no account.

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CHAPTER XXVI

THERE IS SOME TALK OF PARIS AND THE EAST

IT was at the Carlton Hotel, some ten days after Japhon Fearney sailed for Holland, that Ernest Hobby confessed his views upon later-day tragedies as performed at the West End theatres.

"I've seen three of them in four days, Canning," he said, "and in every one of them there is a fool of a husband whose wife wants to go off with another man, but doesn't. You know all about it long before the curtain drops on the first act. Jones is a millionaire and works all day. Smith is an artist, or a dilletante, or a fool, and he flirts with Mrs. Jones in her husband's absence at the office. Brown is a genial person who will save Mrs. Jones at the last moment. Now, my dear Canning, is this a bit like life? Does a woman really dislike the man who works for her happiness, and are there so many Browns in the world always ready to save these ladies from the rascally Smiths? I can't believe it—I've lived a good many years, and I never saw the woman who disliked a man just because he was busy, nor have I come across the amiable meddler

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who is so ready to discover scandal in other people's houses. Surely it's nonsense—you have lived among these people and you know."

Canning liked the simplicity of Hobby's talk and used to encourage him in these heresies. They had been ten days at the Carlton together, living there as any tourists up to London for a holiday. And they were on the eve of more extended travels—Heaven knew where.

"My dear Hobby—you are too critical. If our dramatists were absolutely true to life, there wouldn't be a play on the stage—the censor would see to it. Always remember that what interests is not the normal, but the abnormal. Possibly, round about us at these very tables, there are plenty of Joneses, but few Browns. Brown is necessary to the tragedian—in our humdrum existence his place is often taken by the judge, though that is a fact we must not dilate upon."

"Then you do believe that men who work are likely to have a bad time as husbands?"

"I don't believe it at all. It is true that commerce does not inspire high ideals—but you must remember that your commercial man rarely succeeds before he is forty—by which time he has a family of sons and daughters and his wife is a dowager. The idle few may be responsible for the

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tragedies—indeed, we know that they are—but the idea that all is rotten in the state of Denmark because a few men are rogues and a few women unfaithful, is just as pernicious a doctrine as any you could name to me.”

“I am sure of it. What I quarrel with is the eternal sameness of the story. They say there are no new plots—two men and one woman or two women and one man—I wonder what the Greek tragedians would have had to say to that?”

“Ah, there we must be fair. When Medea rends her children or Alcestis goes to the Shades, there are possibilities unknown to the moderns, with their eternal scenes in Park Lane, or second acts in the casino at Monte Carlo. Modernity is everywhere the foe to romance. The new socialism will wipe out all the romantic figures—we shall have no braver uniform than a banded cap with a badge on it—no more splendid hero than the fireman on the top of a ladder. We are nearer to it every day. Regard *nosotros* as the Spaniards say—what would they have thought of this dinner suit in the days of Charles the King? My dear Hobby, they would have locked us up in Bedlam immediately for wearing boards upon our chests, and considered us little less than lunatics for imprisoning our throats in impossible bands of linen.”

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"That's true—and yet we do it because no man has the pluck to set the fashion. Now, in the East——"

"Ah, the East—that brings light to the eyes. I'll take you to the East if you like, Hobby—the East of Europe to begin with—Turkey, Hungary, Greece—then to India, to Burmah, to China, to Japan. My dear fellow, we shall begin to live in the East. This is but existence and not very tolerable at that."

Hobby looked at him a little sadly. How heavy was the debt his fellow men had called upon this clever man to pay! Even these few days in London had been a torture to John Canning. He was sure of it.

"Are you really willing to go?" he asked, a little nervously. "Does London bore you already?"

"Of course it does. Any city which brings evil memories is anathema to a sensible man. This London is full of them. Ghosts meet me at every corner. I wake up in the morning to live ancient days and to lament them. Phantoms everywhere, Hobby—castles of the dreams, whose gates are shut to me; friends who pass by on the other side—how shall I like London and why should I live here?"

"Oh, but you have met a good many men these last few days."

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Canning laughed so loudly that a waiter turned to look at him.

"I'll tell you—I met Horace Gipps, the banker, to-day and he asked me to lunch—at a hotel. Do you see, my boy, you can't take convicts among your women folk—it wouldn't do—and yet you must get money out of them if they have got any. Gipps banks my money and offers me—the seclusion of a private room in a private hotel. Then there's young Val Percival, who was my closest friend at King's. I saw him in the Park yesterday and he clambered into his phaeton to avoid me. He doesn't want my money and so we don't speak. A third is that notorious rogue, Bernard Philpotts—his real name is Abraham. He asked me to his house—but I discovered that his wife and children are at Brighton. Finally, I met the woman who was to be my wife—she was coming out of the Haymarket last night. She stared me full in the face and did not even change color. In my case even money is not the key. I could rent a house in Park Lane to-morrow and fill it with rascals of all kinds, unspeakable men, women who would sell their souls—but what's the gain in that? How does Self, sitting in a high place, like the worship of the great kingdom of vice and roguery, the applause of mendicants, the love of mercenary women? Is that

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amnesty? Does such a victory satisfy? I tell you I would sooner starve with the meanest upon the Thames Embankment than suffer an hour of it. That's why I'm going to the East, Hobby—and there's the reason why you should accompany me."

Hobby shook his head sadly.

"I have my work to do, Canning. Little homes like mine don't send men round the world to enjoy themselves. I have the wife and kiddies to consider and am thankful if I can keep everything going. When people speak to me about holidays—motor cars, yachts, and all that sort of thing—they are doing me no service. Workers in olden times were better off, just because they didn't know what they missed. I'm sure the daily papers must be torture to thousands of good fellows who never get a real holiday, and wouldn't ask for one if it wasn't for what the papers say."

"That's true. Our greatest heroes are not statesmen or soldiers or even successful barristers—they are the humble folk working in the gloom of the city and resting in the gloom of the suburbs. These go unhonored and unsung. They live daily tragedies. The tax gatherer's knock is often an omen of doom to them. They have no societies to help them—they live and die unaided. Yes, these men are the heroes—and here in England we have a few millions of them, thank God."

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"I say the same—but you don't put me into that category, surely. My work is a real pleasure to me. I dream dreams which are reward enough, even if they remain dreams. Some day I believe that I shall do something, please God—though I wish I could tell you when the day was coming."

"It will come soon if you are determined that it shall come. But you must add patience to determination—and must make sacrifices. I shall take you to France whatever you say, and you will spend excellent weeks lying, metaphorically, on your back and studying the architectural wisdom of the ancients. In Rouen alone, I will make your fortune, Hobby—you would be a madman to neglect the opportunity."

Hobby did not make an immediate response. Truth to tell, he suffered no little anxiety on his friend's behalf, and grieved much over the circumstances which had driven them from Bell Island. The world must be full of evil temptations to such a man at such a time, he thought. Far better to remain quietly in the shelter of his new home, winning the people's confidence and regaining his old self-respect. These Eastern cities with their idle and voluptuous life—for here you had the suburban view—the glamour of new lands, the excitement of travel would minister but ill to a mind harassed by one desire and sustained but by one hope. This

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the little man was shrewd enough to perceive; but he did not express it, for another had come upon the scene, and, with an instant prescience of danger, Ernest Hobby sat back in his chair to listen.

What a beautiful creature she was! he said—for thus was the manner of his expression. Though London is but a social wilderness in October, there were many well-known folk in the Carlton lounge, many well-dressed women who were “passing through”; a goodly sprinkling of men just returned from the moors or the cures—and not a few members of Parliament called back to the dull labors of an autumn session. Among these my Lady of the States moved with charming grace and becoming majesty. Faultlessly dressed in a gown of the richest lace, wearing diamonds as her only ornament, the Countess de Failes had long forgotten that France was not the land of her birth, and that Philadelphia had established the fortunes of those ancestors whose very names she had almost forgotten. For she had married a French nobleman, whose châteaux were not in Spain, but upon the banks of the Loire; and one of whose forebears had followed the Marquis de Lafayette to that very America which re-established the splendor of his decaying household.

Now, John Canning knew this lady well; he had been concerned formerly with her husband in float-

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ing a motor-car company in Paris and had stayed at the Château de Nivres for weeks together; drawn there less by the hope of adding to his fortunes than of enjoying the society of this charming woman. When he met her again thus unexpectedly at the Carlton Hotel, his satisfaction was abounding—hers not less reticent. Be sure that such a woman knew nothing of the tragedy or its meaning. She had always liked the Englishman whose ways were so very American, for such was a charming feminine inconsistency—and his rediscovery pleased her beyond any event of a wearying season of pleasure.

“Why, it’s Mr. John Canning, I do believe—now where have you been hiding all these years and years, and whatever do you mean by deserting your old friends in this way?”

The men stood at her approach, and she drew a chair to their table with the greatest nonchalance. The general babble and confusion permitted Canning to hide the distress to which her question had put him, and to make a commonplace answer.

“Don’t tell me that you are curious,” he said quietly; “that is not a social vice in our time. The world goes too fast to leave us time for curiosity. Say that I was dead and have come to life again—and permit me to introduce my friend, Mr. Ernest Hobby.”

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She bent her head—a salute returned by Hobby in a suburban bow, which began at his boots and finished at the back of his head. When coffee had been served and she had lighted a cigarette, she persevered in her endeavor to learn what her friend had been doing during the years.

“My husband is in America,” she said quietly; “I am quite alone, and for two weeks I have been insufferably bored in this hotel. You shall amuse me by telling me about your travels—I want to hear about the women, not the tigers—every one tells me about the tigers and that makes me tired. Now, Mr. Canning, you won’t tell me about the tigers——”

“Are they generally associated with women, Countess—your own suggestion?”

“Why! was it? But you see I’ve lived fifteen years in Europe—what else could I say?”

“Oh, many things—you could tell me about the Château de Nivres to begin with. I carry a memory of it in my dreams. A winding shallow river, a bridge of arches, turrets, towers, a little chapel, a great ballroom from whose windows you can fish, a range of green hills across the valley—the forest, a forest of dreamland everywhere. Now, is not that the Château de Nivres and do I overpraise it?”

She admitted that he did not.

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"You must write an account of it when my husband wishes to sell it," she said—and this turned astonished eyes upon her.

"Sell it—what an infamy! He doesn't contemplate anything of the kind, surely?"

"He may do so—when we quarrel. A man often wishes to sell the house of his disagreements."

"You are speaking of the future, Countess?"

"Naturally—is one really to be blessed with a memory in these days? My husband is wise—he has gone to America to learn the first of all lessons. Do you know what that is, Mr. Canning?"

"Certainly—there is one god and gold is his profit."

She laughed, tapping his arm with her fan and sipping her coffee before she spoke again.

"Woman is the lesson in America. Men learn it thoroughly—you will learn it when you marry."

"Then you know that I am not married."

"I divined it instantly. You cannot keep such a secret from a woman. You are not married, and you are coming to the Château de Nivres immediately. Oh, my dear man, you won't leave me to die of ennui?"

"I am very sorry, Countess—my friend here
——"

"But he will come, too. It will give me the greatest pleasure. Let us see, to-day is Wednesday—I

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shall expect you both at the Château on Saturday night."

"But——"

She laughed, rising upon the word.

"There is no 'but' in a woman's dictionary, cher Monsieur. I shall expect you on Saturday night and you will not disappoint me. Now—good night. I have been to all the tragedies and I am tired out. At Nivres we will learn to live again."

She left them with a smile, passing as a born *grande dame* through the admiring throngs to the great staircase and her bedroom. The men, for their part, staring foolishly at each other, sat down *maladroitly* and feared, each in his turn, to speak of it. It may even be that rapid and searching questions were asked by both—Canning deceiving himself with ready replies to the interrogatories of excuse; Hobby perplexed by those of wisdom. For be sure that this kindly creature guessed already something of the truth. "There is a woman," he was saying, "who may be the enemy of this man's peace—I will go with him to Nivres."

"You see," exclaimed Canning at last, as one speaking his thoughts aloud, "we could go to Paris to-morrow and I could trot you round the city on Friday. Saturday would take us to Nivres. I don't know any place where a man of your profession would learn as much."

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Hobby laughed out loud.

"Look here, Canning—you're not thinking about architecture—you're thinking about that woman."

"If so, my thoughts will do her no discredit."

"I hope not—well, I'll come with you if you like. I've never seen much of France and you certainly want a chaperon. Oh, yes, I'll go, all right."

"My dear Hobby, you would make an excellent mother-in-law."

"The very thing you told me on the island—when I spoke to you about little Jesse. I wonder what she is doing to-night, Canning."

Canning stood up immediately.

"Oh, I'm in no mood for philosophic speculations. She would be sleeping, I suppose."

"Or dreaming, old chap—eh? These young girls know how to dream. It's only when you have châteaux in France that you begin to sleep soundly, eh? Well, we'll go to Nivres—and come back soon."

They shook hands upon it and went to their respective rooms; but it was long before either slept. The few clever words dropped by Hobby were not lost upon his friend, nor did he fail to recall them often during that long night of wakefulness. How disastrous had been his attempts to anchor himself securely to the rock of a good woman's love! How cruelly the world had dealt by him, that his stigma

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of failure should brand him to the end! And it must always be so, he thought, in such a case as his. Society neither forgets nor forgives. The solemn words spoken by a judge who knows nothing of the criminal before him, the dark years of the prison life are but the beginning of the reaping. The true punishment comes afterward, and has no end but in death.

He warred against the world in those hours—warred against all social codes and the common faiths. What forbade him quitting such an existence and turning to that sun of pleasure which would shine upon him in a new country, among a people who knew him not, or knowing, would not care? Who could judge him for that or hold him guilty? He had the best years of his life yet to live—if his own country had no use for them, if the very villages must ring with the story of his infamies, what heritage of duty forbade him to go forth to the wilderness? A sense of culminating injustice answered “none.” The night tempted him with the dream pictures of a glowing sensualism; of cities and fair women and golden palaces; of mountains girding a promised land; of kings and peoples who would honor him; of riches which could purchase all human joys. And he submitted to them, battling with sleep for their enjoyment and surrendering none of them until the dawn. When

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at last he slept, these visions passed to give place to others—but not of the East nor of the voluptuary's dominion. For now he dreamed of Jesse Fearney—and her name was upon his lips when they waked him to the day which should carry him from England upon an uncertain pilgrimage.

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CHAPTER XXVII

JESSE HEARS THE TRUTH

THE cruiser *Marathon* returned to its anchorage at Bell Island three days after Japhon Fearney's flight; but not until the afternoon of the following day could Philip Blake get leave to go ashore, and hear the strange news which a dozen willing gossips about the harbor gates were only too ready to tell him.

"Be you going up to the farm, sir? Well, there be rare goings on. 'Tis said the police are in the house and the old man in Holland. We don't rightly know ourselves, but 'tis extraordiner strange to be sure. Mr. Moss, he came across late las' night. We don't 'xactly know what such as 'ee be a-doing up there, but 'tis after old Japhon for sure. Ay, a mighty secret man he were and keepin' it cleverly, too, from his friends and naybers. But 'tis all give over now, sir, and the darter in a sad plight, as you'll learn for yourself if you be going up."

The speaker was old Tom Weede, standing back to the wall and smoking his pipe as unconcernedly as though the arrest of half the population would

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not trouble him at all. Others betrayed no more feeling, and were chiefly anxious to hear what the lieutenant would say. Had he not been "courting" up at the farm ever since the *Marathon* came round to the Bristol Channel—why, surely he should know? When he professed a healthy ignorance, their astonishment was undisguised.

"What do you all mean?" he asked them. "The police, you say? What have the police to do with Japhon Fearney?"

"Ay, maister, that's what a good many on us would like to know. Ye see, he were a secret man and uncanny—and that's the sort the police do well to look after when the trouble begins——"

"Has he escaped them? Has he gone?"

"Sailed for Holland three days ago and no more heard of. The lifeboat went out but could not find 'ee. Belike the old man is where the King's writ can't touch him. 'Twere a dreadful night and not for such a bit of a boat as he put out in. Ay, Japhon were not the man to be took by the law, sir—he knowed summat, he did—and if alive he is, it won't be Moss of Bideford as will clap hands upon 'him, take it from us, sir."

Philip Blake could make nothing of it. What in Heaven's name were they chattering about? He would have staked his life on Japhon Fearney's honesty—but this story of a secret voyage was

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another thing altogether. He remembered what a night of wind and sea it had been. If the old man were drowned and the mainland had the story, of course, the police would bring it over. And this, he said, was the origin of all this callous talk, these attitudes of wonder, these "I would's and I could's." A pitiful people, a sordid, callous company from which any man might pray to be delivered.

"Do you say that Miss Jesse is alone in the house?" he asked them. Abe Benson answered him.

"She be in the house, all right, leastwise if she've lost her fancy for roving when decent folk be in their beds. Arst my son Frank—he'll tell you she slept up in Whiterock coppice the night the old man sailed away. Her fancy man be off to England—'twere like a woman to be out all night in a nor'-wester to call him back again. But you'll be going up presently yourself, sir," he added sagely—"and no doubt correcting some of us if we be wrong."

This was a far from subtle attempt to get the news first hand; for, in truth, these people knew little but what their eyes told them, and even Frank Benson, who had extorted the truth about the quarrel from Hannah, the maid, had not, despite his cunning, succeeded in forcing his way into the farmhouse. All that Bell Island could tell you truly was that Japhon Fearney sailed away from

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the northern creek sixty hours ago, that the lifeboat had searched for, but had not found him, and that the police in company with the Customs officer was now at the farm, on a mission which could be surmised, but not stated. The rest was the crude fretwork of ill-governed tongues. It failed to convince any of them—it certainly failed to convince Philip Blake.

He walked on quickly to the farm, not a little curious, not a little sad. Disaster is often a ready excavator of buried thoughts, dragging them from the graves which self-justification has digged, and setting them fearfully under God's blue sky. Such a skeleton now stood before Philip Blake and asked him troublesome questions. Why had he visited Fearney's farm so often? What was the meaning of his visits? Why did he intrude there when he knew full well that Jesse Fearney loved another man? Had his intentions toward her been honorable or dishonorable? She must have suffered much if this tale were true—endured those secret sorrows which are a woman's heaviest burden. Had he, Philip Blake, added to those burdens, been the foe to her happiness, nay worse, the chief among her enemies? These matters he did not dare to sift to the bottom. A man knows when all is not well, and must be deaf indeed if the voice of shame has nothing to say to him.

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He accused himself and yet could be thankful for the accusation. No harm had been done. This lonely, friendless girl, whose bright eyes had so often made his heart dance, she should find a friend in him, even if he came but at the eleventh hour. Her father's disgrace, if disgrace it were, must make no difference. He would stand in Japhon Fearney's place until the old fellow returned—he would delight in such service as a man can give honestly and disinterestedly. So, at least, said Sir Valiant as he hurried up the cliff path to the farmhouse door. The bright eyes must tempt him no more—alas, that bright eyes refuse so often to do a brave man's bidding!

In such a mood as this came Philip to the farm and knocked softly at the door. The appearance of a burly sergeant of police in no way surprised him after what he had heard in the village. It was clear now that the worst had happened, and he was glad to think that he might yet be in time to help Jesse.

"Is she at home?" he asked—for it was very natural to mention no names. The sergeant, who knew the officers of the *Marathon* very well and had an official respect for them, replied without any subterfuge—

"The lady's in the orchard, I think, sir. This is a bad business, Mr. Blake, and I fear it will be

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worse. They say the old man never reached Holland alive—but you'd like to walk in, sir; you might wish to see Miss Fearney."

Philip said that he did. A few questions to the sergeant obtained plain, if unpleasant, answers. It was quite true that a warrant had been issued for old Japhon's arrest. He and Holly Angus had been running a doubtful business for some years, and this saccharin smuggling was the meanest part of it. The lawyers would prove embezzlement and fraud to a large degree—Angus was booked for ten years' penal servitude, and if old Fearney were caught he would certainly get five.

"But he'll never be caught, sir," the sergeant added sagely; "he's where no warrant will touch him, and glad I am for that. When a man has such a daughter we may be glad to see disgrace passing him by and visiting others. I daresn't tell the young lady so—but we don't believe her father's alive, and that's the truth of it."

Philip said that he supposed it must be so.

"But we must do our best for the rest of them," he rejoined, "and we needn't say more than is necessary, sergeant. I'm sure you won't do that."

The sergeant said: "Oh, no indeed, sir." He had children of his own and could afford to be a man, as well as an officer of police. The search then being made among Fearney's papers was nec-

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essary, but would be done with as much delicacy as possible—and afterward one of them must remain at the farm—such were their instructions, which he hoped would embarrass Miss Fearney as little as possible. “But perhaps you will see her for yourself and tell her so,” he concluded. “It’s difficult for the likes of us to do that kind of work, as you will very well understand, sir.”

Philip agreed and went straight through the farmhouse to the yard beyond, and thence to the orchard. He found Jesse sitting upon an old bench near the swing which had played so large a part in the story of her childhood; and he perceived at once how great a surprise this visitation had been, for she still wore the apron which served for her household duties and he could detect no emblem of a woman’s vanity in her appearance.

And then her welcome. The fervor of it, the sudden understanding that a friend had come to the house, that here was a man who would help a woman in the hour of her need. Philip Blake found this the most difficult part of it—Sir Valiant trembled before the touch of those hot hands, before the tear-stained eyes which the light of hope had kindled to sudden brightness, before the musical words of thanks and recognition.

“Oh, Mr. Blake, Mr. Blake!—oh, it is indeed you! And I have been alone so many, many hours.”

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Philip took both her hands in his and looked into the laughing eyes, laughing despite their sadness.

"I knew nothing, Miss Jesse—how could I? We only came in last night—this is the first time I have been ashore. But of course I came up here at once—you know that I did."

She ignored it, beginning to tell him quickly of her troubles and of the woe which had come upon their house.

"My father sailed away three nights ago—we had quarreled—about—about Mr. Canning. I did not see him—oh, Mr. Blake! he went without a word to me and I have received neither letter nor message since. And now the police have come here. They say they are looking for some papers which belong to Mr. Holly Angus—but I don't understand that. Oh, what shall I do, what shall I do?—and my father gone from me like this—oh, Mr. Blake!—gone and I alone—what shall I do?"

He drew her toward the seat and began to talk to her quietly.

"Is Canning back at the Castle yet?" he asked her. She shook her head, but did not answer.

"Do you know where he is living in London?"

"He did not tell me—why should he have done?"

"Then there is no chance that your father sailed over to the mainland and went on to London?"

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Her eyes lighted at this—here was something she had never thought upon.

“It might be—and yet—but no, he would not let me see him, he forbade me to go to the house—after it was known. It could not be that, Mr. Blake.”

“Then he may have gone there on other business—perhaps to see the lawyers. What I cannot understand is his silence. He would have written to you, I should think, that is if he crossed in safety. It was a dreadful night—the whole village is talking about it.”

He avoided her glance now, and for a little while neither spoke. Jesse had thought of this terrible possibility, but had not dared to speak her thoughts to any one.

“Do you believe my father is dead, Mr. Blake?”

“God forbid—I’ll believe no such thing. He was a fine sailor—he would have run for shelter when he saw how the wind was rising. I should say he might have had to lie up somewhere for a day or two—but you will hear soon, perhaps to-morrow. In any case, it won’t be long before Canning returns—that I’m sure of.”

She flushed at this, wondering why he would speak of it—for she knew that he loved her and that talk of John Canning must be hateful to him.

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"I don't believe he'll ever come to Bell Island again," she said thoughtfully.

"But you wish him to come—tell me that, Jesse—you wish him to come?"

She did not answer him. Flushed cheeks, the averted face, the quick beating of her heart were answer enough. Had Philip Blake confessed the truth, he would have said that this was the greatest hour of temptation he had lived through. Oh, how easy it would have been to have played the *rôle* of some worshipping Knight Errant, who would have taken all her burdens upon his stout shoulders, whispered stories of new lands and a new home, bidden her rise up and follow him to an Eldorado where all but his love and worship should be forgotten! This many another would have done. He believed that he had but to put the picture before her in sufficiently glowing colors to win a victory beyond all his hopes. For what would such a child think of form and ceremony in such an hour? What would be her scruples in the face of this tragedy of death and shame? "Tell her the truth and she will go with you," a voice whispered in his ear. It needed all Sir Valiant's courage to cope with that.

Long he sat silently wrestling with this supreme temptation. How beautiful she was! What a picture of English girlhood in its maturity! How winning

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were all her gestures, even those of her sorrow! And he had but to speak the word, the canting word, alike hypocritical and veracious. Let him but say to her, "Your father is a felon, the law is seeking him, he fled from you to escape shame and a prison"—and who would doubt her answer? If he forbore, the lessons of a life of discipline and of duty helped him to the victory. And their help was noble. Long years afterward Philip Blake remembered that hour and thanked God for it.

"Jesse," he said at last, "do you remember my telling you that the old guv'nor knew the true story of John Canning and his trial?"

She looked up at him, a new light altogether in her eyes.

"Oh, yes, yes, I remember it perfectly."

"Well, I managed to get home for half a day last week and I had it out with the guv'nor. There is a clerk in our office at home who knows a good many things Canning would like to hear, if some one would only tell him as much. Now, why don't you do that?"

"Oh, but, Mr. Blake—is it about his trial?"

"It is about the particular charges they brought against him when his company went down. My father thinks he would have got off, if he had known then as much as old Fred Willing, our clerk, knows now. Of course it may not all be true, but

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I think we ought to let Mr. Canning know, and you're the one to do it."

Her face clouded—did he forget what had happened, then?

"But how can I write to him, Mr. Blake—he has gone away, you know—how could I send a letter?"

"There should be half a dozen ways. I'm going up to town next week when our work is done here, and I'll find out all about it for you. I suppose they'll keep us hanging around another day or two, for the Admiral is keen about a lot of things and we don't join the fleet for another fortnight. I ought to get a few days' leave when we do go, and I'll use them to discover all about Canning and to let you know. You must tell him everything—you must ask him to come back here and help you, Jesse——"

"Help me—oh, I would never ask him to do that."

"He'll do it without any asking. I wish I had his opportunities."

He sighed a little wistfully. Honest in truth was that expression, and spoken from his heart. But it fell upon deaf ears. He watched Jesse's face narrowly, and failed to perceive even a glance which should bid him to hope. This confession obsessed her. The idea that John Canning might return, that he might hear good news from her lips,

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oh, was it not some atonement for all that she had suffered in the darker hours? Nay, her eyes told Blake as much, and he had no courage to persist.

"We shall be off here more or less until the beginning of next week," he said; "if I can get ashore I'll be here like a shot—and, be sure, I'll write to old Fred Willing this very day and bring you his answer myself. Meanwhile, if there is anything I can do for you here, Miss Jesse, you won't forbid me to do it, I know. Please treat me as your brother—it would be so kind of you."

She gave him a vague promise, the new hope still animating her. When he left her it was upon a renewal of the promise that he would write to London, and bring her the letter which might mean so much to John Canning and his fortunes. The police had finished their search by this time, and but one remained upon a plausible excuse—posted as a sentry about the house and very kind and tactful in all his expressions. To him Blake said "Good night," and slipped half a sovereign in his hand.

"There will be no need to tell the young lady anything," he suggested, and the constable agreed with him. "The old man has not been taken, sir," he rejoined, "and if God Almighty has judged him, there's no need for us to do anything."

"Except to help in a very sad case, and not to forget that we may have children of our own. I

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shall be to and fro during the next few days, sergeant—don't hesitate to send down to the ship if you think I can help."

"I will not, sir—from all I hear you're not the first young gentleman that has been wishful to do so—and some of 'em not so welcome here. There's that young Benson, for instance—the brother of him that first informed on Fearney—you would do well to say a word to him, I think."

Philip's face grew dark.

"What has he been doing, sergeant?"

"Ay, that's what a good many are asking, but he'll do precious little while I'm in the house, and that I promise him."

He said no more and they parted upon it. Half way down the cliff road, however, Philip met Frank Benson face to face, and was instantly recognized by that crafty youth, who had haunted the farm during the last two days, and purposed so to haunt it until Japhon Fearney should return.

"Why, it's Lieutenant Blake," he exclaimed—and added, "Then you've been up to the farm, eh, lieutenant?"

Blake looked him over from head to foot.

"My business, sir—I do not ask yours."

"Oh, you needn't apologize. The police have told you all about it, I'm sure. This is Mr. Canning's work, this is. He and Jesse were going off

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together, but the old man got wind of it. Last Monday night she never went back to the farm at all. That's a fine thing to hear, isn't it? Pretty goings on for such a place as Bell Island, you must say?"

Blake drew a step nearer to him.

"What do you mean by that?" he asked.

"What you like to make of it. She was engaged to me once—I'm jolly glad I didn't marry her."

"You hound! You liar!"

He struck him full in the face, the youth reeling backward from him and lying in craven terror upon the grass. Now was Sir Valiant wearing his armor firmly, hot in just anger and nerved to sound judgments. But he remembered, as he hurried on toward the ship, that yesterday his own intention might have provoked just such words as these, and that but for that silent knight, Sir Conscience, who had gone up to the lonely farmhouse with him, he, too, might have been as little worthy of men's respect as the coward he had left on the cliffside behind him.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

AT THE CHATEAU DE NIVRES

MADAME DE FAILES had gathered an odd company beneath her husband's splendid roof, and right well they amused her during that bright month of October, when "urgent business" still detained the Count in New York.

Here you would find an actor from the Bouffes cheek by jowl with a Marquis from the Basque provinces; a priest of the Sorbonne rubbing shoulders with a professor from Boston; a dozen aristocrats whose united ages would not have aggregated a hundred years whispering undoubted words of wisdom to nymphs of like juvenility. Here, a veritable human *olla podrida* kept the pot of humor boiling all the day and, for that matter, all the night, when occasion offered. For it was Madame's first principle of existence that her guests must amuse her; and she cared not whence they came did they but bring laughter in their train.

And so her house was filled by those whom her husband in his anger had not hesitated to brand as *canaille*. Let her be on nodding acquaintance with any merry fellow and he was sure of an invitation

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to the château. Americans who knew her but by name presented their cards at the gates and were often impressed into her service. She delighted in the very novelty of it all, in this *mélange* of bishops and counts, actors and artists, singers and dancers. Pleasure was her watchword, and pleasure must she reap whatever the season. Did she not suffer enough when her husband was at home? she would ask pathetically. Be sure that he would have none of these folk. They vanished as the mists upon his return—for he was an aristocrat of the older school, and even Madame had grown to be frightened of him.

Now, John Canning and Ernest Hobby had been plunged into this sorry whirlpool just upon three weeks, when next their doings concern us—and cordial indeed had been Madame's welcome of them. Canning himself interested her with his pungent talk as few Englishmen she had met—she felt convinced that he would provoke argument of an exciting kind at her table—while as for his little friend, he who bowed like a tailor and apologized upon all occasions, was not he as amusing as an actor from the Robinière and far more obliging? If to this must be added the foolish conviction that her personal charms made no little impression upon a man who had a physical attraction for many women, the secret of her hospitality is not far to

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guess. She had invited John Canning to the château that she might add one to her many conquests, a phase of amusement which did not fail to entertain her, and for which the years fostered a keener inclination.

So here he was in the thick of it all, the foremost figure in the fêtes, the desired among few desirables—and here was Ernest Hobby, going meekly and a-tiptoe over the velvet pile, wondering at his amazing popularity, half fearing, half ashamed—but at heart the same simple, honest fellow that we have always known him to be. As for the rouged and powdered women who chaffed or made mock love to him, Hobby did not care a snap of the fingers for them. He ate, drank and made moderately merry, but chiefly he followed his friend as a faithful slave of the lamp, who would keep the flame of his friendship bright whatever the consequences.

The latter errand brought him to Canning's bedroom early on the morning of the twenty-first day, and set him in a big armchair by the window, wherefrom he could look out over the shallow waters of the beautiful River Loire, and watch the gardeners among the parterres below. Canning himself was but just awake. A budget of letters from England lay unopened on his bed. Hobby glanced at them aside, but did not dare to speak all his thoughts.

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"I expect you're tired after what went on last night," he began with some hesitation—"I must say these people do keep it up, Canning. They'd kill me if I stopped here long enough."

Canning stretched himself, and glancing in his turn at the letters, admitted that they were rather lively.

"Let me see, Hobby—what did we do after supper? I remember the swans on the lake, and some ass dubbing me the son of Parzival. After that we had the dancers from Smyrna and the fiddlers from Trieste. Was there anything else which was particularly agitating?"

"Of course there was—you were on the island half the night with Madame. I saw you. I was supping with a fairy in one of the pavilions. I say, Canning, don't you think we have had enough of all this? I like a dance as well as any man, and I can eat a good supper when I want one—but supping at five o'clock in the morning and then playing bridge until half-past eight, now do they really like it, do you like it, does any one like it? Isn't it merely the same sort of foolery which sends a hundred sheep through a gate because one has fallen into the ditch on the other side?"

Canning laughed, and lay back on the pillow again.

"These people are like Dickens' cab horse," he

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said; "they would fall down if you took them out of the shafts. I admit it's all moonshine and madness, but you're none the worse off for having seen it, and I'll show you something better before many weeks are passed——"

"Weeks!—you're not going to stop here weeks—why, I should be turned into a marionette if I didn't go soon. Let's get back to London, old chap—we're safer there."

"Safer, Hobby?"

"I mean what I say. This kind of madness is infectious. You can catch it, and when you catch it, you want another kind of madness to cure you. Let's go to-morrow, Canning; I'm sure it's better."

"Impossible, my dear Hobby. Chardon comes here to sing to-morrow and there is the *bal masqué* afterward. I have sworn great oaths—I cannot go to-morrow."

"Then the day after—I'm sure you would like to hear the news from Bell Island. I know you would."

"What news can I expect from that hole?"

"Ah, that's what I don't know. But I believe there is news, and that it is good news. Shall we say the day after to-morrow?"

"If Madame agrees—you see, we owe something to her."

"I suppose we do, Canning. One fool always

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owes something to another who led him to make an ass of himself. Well, I shall go back anyway. I've seen enough of what you call the world to last me half a lifetime. The rest can wait—I'm going round the universe on the instalment plan, and this is the first year's payment as far as I am concerned. My dear man, such a crew of brainless idiots I never imagined let loose on the earth—all the women shrieking like parrots, all the men trying to shut them down, and not half as much honest enjoyment as a farm hand gets at a fair. Oh, you may keep your high life for me—I'd sooner be a tram conductor, upon my word I would."

"But, Hobby—think of your educational possibilities. Are you not going to hunt the wild boar to-day——"

"They say I am. It seems to me I've been hunting him for the last three weeks."

"Learning to be a cynic, too. Well, give me a few hours to think it over. I'm not sure you are not right, and if I come to the conclusion that you are——"

"If you do?"

"We'll be in Rome in sixty hours and in Venice a week afterward."

Hobby was a little disappointed. He knew the whole story of Canning's flight from Bell Island by this time, perceived its significance and the moment

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of it so far as his friend's future was concerned. A true diplomat, he would risk nothing by premature action; but he kept the end in sight and was as determined that his friend should marry Jesse Fearney as ever he was about anything in the whole story of his determined life. Here, he thought, salvation lay; certainly it did not lie in this fetid atmosphere of musk and patchouli, of garden fêtes and masked balls, of suppers when men should be breakfasting and of breakfasts when men should be supping. Hobby's suburbanism was elated by none of these things. He took them at their true value—no costly estimate where such a reckoning was to be made.

We find him, then, content with John Canning's vague promises, and an apparently indifferent participator in the sports of the ensuing day. These were to consist chiefly of a wild-boar hunt in the forest of Nivres, an event of which young men spoke as though some dangerous arena were to be invaded, and the spirits of dead gladiators summoned to their assistance. Nay, the whole courtyard reeked of this mock pageantry when the Englishman appeared there some half an hour later, and discovered a scene which would have delighted the heart of old Rabelais himself. What a curving and pirouetting of magnificent horses! What grotesque effigies of sportsmen! What laughing, ogling, sigh-

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ing dames come out to bid these vain cavaliers God-speed! And behind them all the massive walls of the old château, which had husbanded the sighs of the Pompadour and had echoed the tread of the great Cardinal himself. Here was something, for a modern keeper of the *chroniques scandaleuses*—even John Canning laughed, admitted its drollery.

There is no particular reason why a young man who would hunt the wild boar should wear a suit of black and white checks, a Tyrol hat in a fine shade of green, leggings of a brilliant yellow, and suède gloves of even a more alarming tint. This appeared to be the common costume. There were full a dozen of such valiants, to say nothing of my Lady Diana praying for the groves, and of the more sedate members of the company thinking already of déjeuner within and not of the forest without. Prominent among the latter was the Bishop of Nivres himself—a fine white-haired old courtier and a very descendant of that Nicolas—Jean de Dieu Soult, who was Duke of Dalmatia and a Marshal of France. He moved leisurely amid the throng, the purple stock relieving the sombre black of his cassock and a gentle smile of pity adding benignity to a classic face. For each and all he had the same greeting—"You go to the chase. Ah, my brave, good luck go with you!"

Brave, truly, at the outset and what a gaudy

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cavalcade to quit the château gates and plunge into the heart of the sylvan forest, grown a little sad these autumn days, but still showing you many a patch of sunshine in the intervals of trees! Here, said history, the eternal Diana, she of Poitiers and the salamander, had roved afar with Henry and with Francis; here the Duc de Guise had hunted but a few short weeks before they slew him at Blois, and the King his master remarked coldly, upon seeing his corpse, that he had thought he had been taller—and here, now at the beginning of the twentieth century, went Madame la Comtesse de Failes, *née* Judith Cartwright of Philadelphia, upon a prancing white horse which had come out of Araby, and clothed in a gown which even the critics of Paris would style *le dernier cri*. No pageant, for sure, had inspired a finer energy since Madame DuBarry led the frolics in these very glades and a King was named the “well-beloved” at her bidding. The gay laughter, the gaudy dresses, the ambling horses, the fine greenswards, rough woodlanders in stout homespuns, the burns splashing amid gnarled trunks and—distant, but never long hidden from their view, the fine turrets and matchless spires of the Château de Nivres—oh, it was well enough, as a cynic would have admitted.

Now Madame took care to keep Canning in her train, and, as they went, she told him something of

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the hunting which was to follow. Butts had been built, it appeared, to shelter this gallant company. Whatever the glories of sport in other lands, Sir Lord Pig must go at some disadvantage in this. No sticking here—no wild gallops—not, at any rate, until the boar was dead and the keepers were dealing with his carcass.

"Why, there isn't a man of them would come if I didn't," she said, referring to the butts; "do you know that Monsieur le Marquis de San Rosas spent two hours yesterday morning shooting black-birds, and brought one home tied to the end of a stick? We send the keepers into the wood to drive the boars out and then we shoot at them. Now, isn't that fine?"

"For the keepers?" Canning asked. She didn't like that.

"You English think you are the only sportsmen in the world. I guess that's your vanity. Why should we be gored by pigs if we don't feel like it? I don't see the necessity."

"Most prudent, Countess. This is an age which takes to butts generally when there is any trouble about. I am very glad of it. Credit me with no desire at all to become a martyr—I'll be first into the shelters when the fun begins."

"Then it's going to begin now. This is the Gorge of the Three Cascades—we shall find a boar here if

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we have any luck. Of course they won't let the girls come—they say it's too dangerous."

"A noble sentiment. Does the boar appear upon the particular scene they choose for him?"

"Well, I hope so—I should have a fit if he came my way."

She laughed and summoned the head keeper to her side. The scene they had chosen disclosed a rugged cliff on the right hand, down which there trickled three considerable cascades. A wood lay beyond on the higher ground and a big grassy mound on the left. Here the ladies of the party were to be anchored, lusty keepers protecting them, while the men circumvented the thicket and took up their stations on the hither side of it. The latter proceeding evidently was not much to the taste of some of the gallant sportsmen who went a-tiptoe and with caution. The premature appearance of a slinking fox caused a veritable hullabaloo, some of the cavaliers running like athletes, others crying "Ciel!" But this alarm soon passed—the ladies were herded on the green mound, my lords conducted to the distant butts before the wood from which the lordly pig should be driven. And once within the sheltering bulwarks the old ferocity of demeanor was easily reassumed. Ah, there were fierce ejaculations now!

So behold twenty check-suited men, one resem-

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bling the other as a pea resembles a brother pea, herded together in this pen for the applause of Diana upon the mountain. The bold keepers had plunged into the copse by this time and were shouting their resonant cries of "Marchez! En avant! Allez donc!" until the very welkin rang. The sportsmen, thrusting cartridges into their rifles, peered from the fastness as though cavalry was about to debouch from the wood. Anon comes the boar—slowly, with meditative step, snout still rooting, wicked little eyes turning this way, that way, every way. What the devil does all this commotion mean? He has not sensitive nerves—but really at twelve o'clock of the day! Are these men drunk? He has seen them often in the forest from the seclusion of his cave which brigands of long ago were good enough to build him. He could tell tales perchance—of mademoiselle yonder with the witching eyes and that frowsy poet who is her faithful cavalier, of Madame la Marquise and the painter Andreot; of these and of many another—but he has never said a word. Bless him, he would not open his lips, on any account—yet here are all these people staring at him, and what a din! Young man, he seems to say, be careful of that gun, for if it goes off it will kill somebody.

Now, Master Boar had hardly showed himself on the fringe of the wood when, contrary to all the

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rules of the game, the Chevalier Orson, a meek sportsman of thirty years, let fly at him, to the imminent danger of the beaters behind and the exasperation of the head keeper in front. Wild shouts and cries rent the air. The ladies, penned on the mound, clapped their hands altogether and cried "Bravo!" The fierce pig, snout upward, eyes blazing, turned sharply to re-enter the wood and sent twenty of the groundsmen to the shelter of twenty trees. Ay, now is the hullabaloo at its best! The concealed army of sharpshooters fire like an infantry squad. The guns go off in numbers—bark flies from the trees; the gravel is scoured, the leaves are torn. Wounded in a dozen places, the wretched beast begins to run round and round. A dog approaches him and is instantly ripped up as a sack by a knife. He charges the trees blindly, believing in his madness that these are the enemies. And all the time the firing does not cease—the crack of rifles resounds, the bullets wing their hadardous way until, with a mighty shout of triumph, my lord falls headlong and the beaters are upon him. Ah, the glory of it! Ah, the ecstasy of the sportsman's life!

There was but a single pig in this copse and much shouting failed to disclose another. This did not disturb the company, of which each man believed that his bullet had found a billet, and that

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he was the hero of the death cry. Hunger, a powerful rival, began also to press his claim, since it was commonly admitted that adequate glory had been achieved, and that soles à la Victoria might have their turn. So, emerging, the valiants made for the striped marquee in which Chef André from a famous restaurant had prepared his wares—and here *déjeuner* at well-placed tables soon made amends for danger and the strife. What a contention now for places! The laggards had driven over from the château, be it known, and Monseigneur with them—but no one seemed desirous to establish a *ménage à quatre* with him when he took his rightful place at Madame's table—Judith must tolerate the dear good man for her husband's sake—besides, as she added naïvely, had not Providence already inflicted him with that tolerant blindness which sees little beyond the end of the nose and is not desirous of seeing further? She could accept any episcopacy on such terms—her case would undoubtedly have been harder had the Rev. Joshua Wagg, her own minister from Philadelphia, arrived unexpectedly at the château.

It was a dainty repast, elegantly served and owing not a little to a day of soft sunshine and gentle breezes. The rains of autumn had given place to this St. Martin's summer, permitting unexpected pageantry and many a woodland romance that

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would never have survived the umbrellas. And when it was done what more natural than that the company should break up—not into units, to be sure, but *à choix*, as the catalogues say, and done with an artless simplicity which spoke both of freedom and of habit. God help my lord Bishop now, for no one wants him—and he must walk back through the forest with young Vambret, the penniless poet of the Butte, who will try to borrow a hundred francs of him as they go. For the rest, Madame is with Canning, of course—and that little Ernest Hobby, has not he gone off by himself to make a drawing of Joan of Arc's tower, as he had no shame to confess? Here was discretion, to be sure—Canning wondered at Hobby and so did Madame.

"Why, what can you have in common with such a dear, good, foolish little man as that?" she asked as they rode away. "I'm sure a fox terrier would be just as useful."

"I suppose he would—he is my confessor, you must know. Whenever I do anything foolish I go to Ernest Hobby, and tell him what an ass I have been. Then he apologizes."

"Are you really going to take him to Rome and to Venice—he told me so yesterday."

"It's quite true—I am going to walk the aisles of St. Peter's and talk of the archilids—as many

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of them as I remember. We shall dine at seven o'clock every night and go to bed at ten. Perhaps we shall hire guides. I am a very ignorant man, and while I remember the pictures I have no head for the painters. It will be the day after to-morrow that we shall leave—with your gracious permission."

"Then it will not be the day after to-morrow at all. Why should you go? Are you really perishing to do Rome? It will still be there if you go next month. And I want you here—I shall certainly forbid it."

She looked charming, Canning thought, in her close-fitting green habit and the dainty hat which had come from the Faubourg St. Honoré. A woman of mature figure and clear open eyes, of a high brow and brown hair swept well back from it—of fine rounded limbs and shapely hands—but, above all, a woman who had learned how to command and had profited by her lessons. Canning admitted all this as he strode at her side, he knew not whither and cared less. Surely the world had not done so well by him that he needed to remember to-morrow.

"If you don't permit it," he said slowly, "I shall have to break the news to my warm-hearted friend. But he will never forgive you for not letting him escape—he is that kind of man—and you frighten

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him. I can see it whenever he is at your table. He goes in awe of you, Countess—he is just like a boy in a class who may be called upon to construe presently and doesn't know the text. He may even think that you are going to box his ears."

"Perhaps I shall if he continues to be obstinate. Why, you have only been at the château a few days—and I want you so much. Say, Mr. Canning, isn't that something you know already—that I want you here very much?"

She pressed her horse quite close to him and laid a little hand upon his arm. They had drawn away from the others to a lonely place of the forest—to a leafy glade through which the sunlight streamed at hazard, and the song of the burn rang musically in their ears. As a sound afar, there came to them the voices of the huntsmen, the lighter laughter of girls and even the murmur of songs. This place had been called the River of Dark Waters by the old romancers—if it had been named the River of Sighs the style would have been more apposite. And to such a spot Madame had led her victim for one of those aimless flirtations which delighted her.

"Now, don't you know it, Mr. Canning?" she persisted; and he was not flattered, but amused, for he knew women well.

"I have just said that I am a most ignorant man.

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You must begin upon my education, Countess. You say that you want me here—well, here I am. Isn't that something to begin upon?"

"But I want to tell you all about myself, my difficulties, my ambitions. You are just such a friend as I have been looking for a long while—the man a woman can talk to without any reserve. You know my husband leaves me very much alone?"

"Do you ever tell him that?"

She looked at him almost angrily.

"When a man leaves a woman alone, she is a coward to call him back. He married me to rebuild the château, and he has done it. He says that America owes France her independence and ought to pay the bill. Why, I've paid it twice over and he's gone to America now to see if he can have the money a third time. That's romance as the novelists write it. Oh, if you knew the scenes we have in this old château—which the guide-books tell you is the most peaceful place in all France. Even the servants won't stay with me. Now do you wonder if I want a friend?"

"You have many friends, I am sure. Am I the least devoted of them?"

"I believe that you are. There's not a more difficult man in France. You can be everything a woman desires, I know it—but since you have been here you have been less than nothing at all. Now,

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truthfully and between friends, didn't you leave England because of a woman?"

He was staggered by the question. No shaft could have gone home with aim more unerring.

"Who told you that?" he asked, hiding his face from her—"who has been gossiping about me?"

"A woman's instinct. Do you suppose any man could hide that from me? You quarreled with her and came here in a huff. Perhaps it's an old story. What have you been doing in London all these years? I have neither seen nor heard of you. Why, that's the answer in itself. She didn't like London, perhaps—it was a romance in a wood and the farmer sent the vegetables. Do be kind and tell me. It will be better than a novel."

He mumbled an incoherent answer. Oddly enough, it had never occurred to him that the story of his life might follow him even to these glades. They had left London upon an impulse, just raced away as boys at a call, without thought or reckoning—and now came the breathing space. He looked at Judith de Failes and determined that she knew nothing. "But she will learn the truth," he said—and the fear haunted him.

How if some one proclaimed him felon even in that company of irresponsibles? What shame! What humiliation! And why should he not be revenged upon mere possibility by anticipation?

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What forbade him to make love to this woman, to throw prudence, honor, respect to the winds? Did he owe anything to society which had made of him an outlaw? In truth, he owed nothing.

"I will tell you where I have been, and what I have been doing, when I am convinced that you will keep my secret," he exclaimed suddenly. This was a thrust indeed.

"Why do you think so badly of me as that?"

"Convince me that even one woman is to be trusted, and I will tell you—perhaps."

"How shall I convince you? Why, of course I will if you will show me how."

He laughed hardly.

"Oh, you must find the way. I am merely stating the conditions."

"Do you mean that you doubt—my friendship?"

"I doubt the sympathetic note in the gamut of the feminine emotions. Why compel me to say so? Is it not much better not to know all about your friends? For instance, my dear lady, how very little I know about you."

She laughed now, a sudden perception declaring her opportunity.

"Come, and you shall be my confessor. There's my little Pavilion of Roses where I make 'five o'clock' when the weather is warm enough. We'll go and have tea now, and I will tell you a tale—oh,

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of course you have the right to know everything. I never thought of it."

Ah, delicious comedy, to the man alarming, to the woman a harvest of possibilities! What lies she would tell him presently—and how fine a figure should the little god Love play in them! She would speak of passion with tears in her eyes, whimper a mock confession with her hand in his, sigh upon a tragedy with half-closed lids and murmuring lips. The Pavilion of the Roses was the very place. She had carried him there for no other reason.

Now, this was a little building of timber in the very heart of the forest, girt about with trailing roses and full of sweetness. Here Madame took tea with her friends when the sun permitted, here she had languished and sighed many a time and oft—but never with such a masterful cavalier or one so difficult. John Canning, for sure, was no knight of the picture-books. Perchance but for her questions she would have found him the sorriest of lovers—but opportunity had befriended her, opportunity and a man's bitterness, his revolt against the civilized order, his defiance of the fates which bade him suffer. And he went with her, asking what forbade him to play the comedy to the end. Was it not some reward to watch these large eyes beaming upon him, to be with the voluptuous Judith as she busied herself about the Pavilion, setting great arm-

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chairs to the table, boiling her little tin kettle, baring her fine arms as a kitchen maid, laughing always and promising to confess? Oh, this was the dangerous hour, and God knows where it would have led him but for that blundering little friend of his, who came knocking at the door presently and crying to come in.

Madame started at the sound, and drew back from the table in some affright. Her Knight, however, already guessed the truth and made haste to open.

"Why, Hobby—where have you sprung from?"

"I'm awfully sorry, Canning, I lost my way—do you mind showing me how to get back to the château?"

Of course Madame invited him in at once. Nothing else was to be done. He had lost his way—the poor, simple, good-natured little man—and losing it, he had pointed out a better road to him he served with so faithful a friendship.

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CHAPTER XXIX

THE RIDDLE OF THE CHARADE

THEY rode home together, avoiding all reference to the nature of the encounter and treating it with that proper abandon which is a woman's surest defence. If Madame believed that the intrusion was an unhappy accident, Canning knew better, and was not ungrateful to his friend. None the less a certain defiance warred upon gratitude, and forbade the expression of his thoughts whatever the opportunities. It had come to something if this man must watch him as a tutor watches a boy. Was he not old enough to know his own mind, well schooled enough to choose his own path? None but a *bourgeois* would have done such a thing, he said—and did not disguise his pleasure.

Here was the secret of his after acts. A cool, clear head should have sent him from the château at once—it mattered not whither. But pride detained him. He must show the blunderer that he was master of himself, that he needed no common platitudes to guide him and resented espionage as a vulgarity. Obstinate refusing even to mention the matter to Hobby, he flirted outrageously with

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Madame that night; was her constant companion in the forest and the gardens next day, and openly declared at her dinner table that he would not leave the château for a month. This resolution he might have made good but for the simplest of happenings, indeed but for one of those obvious domestic accidents which even the disingenuous might anticipate.

There had been a mock gymkhana that day, a motor tournament upon the great grass plateau by the river, and much chopping of Turks' heads and assaults upon inoffensive lemons. Judith, herself, was a skilled driver and could fling her *mécanicien* out of the car upon a sharp corner as well as any chauffeur in Touraine. To-day she drove a fine Itala, which a strong man might have envied her, and none was cleverer or more self-possessed. Especially did the passengers' race amuse Judith, and the attempts of the lady drivers to get the males quickly to their seats. Some we must admit solved the difficulty by permitting mere men to pick them up in their arms and carry them. Others, scarcely less sedate, raced hand in hand like children and tumbled into their seats breathless and disarrayed. For this was a business whose success lay in the swiftness with which you drove a car two hundred yards, then raced for a sitting passenger, got him into your car and raced again for the winning post. And being such a race the young approved of it

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highly, playing the game with laughter and even with sighs.

Later on came Cimmerian darkness, a cold wind of eventide and a flight to the house for children's pastimes, for such they played in the stolen hours—until the gong of bells called them to the great hall where François Premier had inscribed his salamander and Henry Deux had not failed to imitate him. This was a more stately meal—an interregnum of the imbecilities. Monseigneur had his chance now, and would discourse learnedly of Pascal and the poets, even of Saint-Beuve and of Balzac. It mattered not that no one listened—Monseigneur was satisfied.

And afterward to the charades. This was Judith's great idea. She would have the charades beloved of her ancestors—costumes from the house of Berliet Frères at Paris, music by an orchestra from La Scala, wonderful gifts to the guessers aright—and afterward the *bal masque* wherein the frivolities should culminate. If Monseigneur had been neglected these twenty days and more, here he was not neglected at all. Had not his wit planned the thing? Had not his been the brain which evolved the pictures? And he was here, there and everywhere at the appointed hour, behind the scenes and before them—a bustling, smiling Bishop, who had not an enemy in all the world.

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Canning came late to the little theatre, for he had been writing a secret letter to Abraham Wesson in London, asking that worthy to get him all the news of Bell Island there was to be had, and to forward it to the Ritz Hotel, at Paris. He had seen nothing of Madame Judith at the dinner table, for she put him purposely *vis-à-vis* to that vastly unentertaining beauty, Mademoiselle Denouf of the Comédie Française, and he had not been so bored for a month. Here, in the theatre, his spirits warmed a little. He was quite sure that the charades would be very childish and very silly, but he could not deny himself the pleasure of gazing upon her ladyship in the guise of a Turkish beauty, nor of hailing her attendant pasha in the ridiculous figure of the Marquis de Bonnes Delices. So he went down about ten o'clock, when the fiddlers were just thumbing their fiddles and the "wind" were quarrelling about the pitch in a way that fiddlers will and the "wind" are in the habit of doing.

Now here, to be honest, a charming picture was to be enjoyed, a scene which would have done no shame to the days of a greater glory and a truer aristocracy. The little theatre itself, built by DuBarry for the delectation of her far from merry monarch, was lighted by hundreds of shell-like lamps depending from the rarest chandeliers of old Venetian glass. Pink and golden in scheme, the ladies

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declared that it suited their complexions to perfection and were incessant in its praises, as well they might be when the cost of it was reckoned. For Madame Judith had spared nothing. Banks of flowers, roses, though the season was November, the rarest palms and shrubs from the African shores, lent their aid to that kaleidoscope of glowing colors and heroic figures. And the dresses! Ah, bon Dieu, as the servants' hall exclaimed next day, the dresses! Was ever such a wealth of lace and chiffon, of silk and costly stuffs, of blazing diamonds and monster pearls, was ever such a treasure house opened before at a woman's bidding and at the dictates of her vanity?

Upon such a scene John Canning descended some few minutes before the curtain should have been lifted. A man of many moods, to-day this mood was restless and cynical. The letter just despatched to old Abraham Wesson could not be forgotten, because the post had engulfed it. He was angry with himself because he had been angry with his friend, and yet not unwilling to laugh at the episode. Oh, be sure vanity had wounded him lightly enough and merely annoyed him now. He was dwelling in this house of farce, he said, because a good man had dared him not to do so. Nothing amused him here. He walked in hourly dread of discovery, saying to himself, "Good God! if they knew, if she

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knew!" His desire to quit the house upon the first decent opportunity warred perpetually upon his determination to establish his prerogative to remain. For Judith Cartwright, become Madame la Comtesse de Failes, he had none of that sentiment which is really dangerous. He could leave her to-morrow without a sigh—as she could permit him to go with an emotion no more overpowering. A prisoner for the time being—pride in his own will power detained him. That he should be lectured by Suburbia in the person of Ernest Hobby! It was too ridiculous.

And so here he sat amid a babel of tongues, before an orchestra already at the death grip with the erring but forgiven Tannhäuser—a lonely man turning from the very friendship which should have been his consolation. When the music rolled away in that massive crescendo of the Pilgrims' Chorus—when the instruments were put down and nothing but a raucous echo of voices came from the other side of the curtain, he was interested for the first time. Were these fools quarreling behind the curtain and would they quarrel presently before it? That would be a delightful interlude—as comic as anything in Labiche and as unexpected!

Now, the house perceived the hitch and fell instantly to expectant silence. Whatever it might be, something clearly had happened. Daring to breathe

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in the hush, a youth suggested that Monseigneur had been marshaling the shepherdesses from Cyprus, perhaps, and that one of them might have boxed his ears. Another, not less venturesome, and he from the distant Americas, "guessed that the machinery wasn't fixed," but was silenced immediately. Finally and quite unexpectedly, the curtain went up with a bound and there stood, not a Turkish beauty from the harem gate, not a pasha fresh from the Holy War, but the figure of Monsieur le Comte himself, of Madame Judith's husband, his red hair bristling, his mouth atwitch in anger, and such a look of disgust upon his far from handsome face that a shout of laughter went up, loud enough to bring down the very goddesses from the ceiling.

Oh, it was all up now, be sure of it. True, the master of the house was too much of a gentleman to quarrel with his guests openly. He had gone to the stage to find out what was happening in his house, and the amateur scene shifters, failing to recognize him, had demanded his instant expulsion. When just anger overtook him and his wrath found immediate and far from grave expression, a wag raised the curtain unexpectedly, and there he stood declared, to the delight of his uninvited guests and the absolute amazement of Madame. Oh, the intolerable cruelty of it!—to return from America without so much as a cable. Oh, the obtuseness of

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a man who fails to see that he may not be welcome in his own house! Madame could have beaten Monsieur le Comte with her fan at that moment. Never was such humiliation—even the good Bishop blushed to have been found in.

Be it said that the entertainment went on, but not as Madame planned it. Every one seemed to understand that this was the last night of carnival, and that to-morrow would disperse the party. Judith herself made the most mournful Turkish beauty that ever trod an amateur stage. Gone were all her high spirits; she acted mechanically and by rote—the very lover in the dashing fez might have been glad to be quit of her. And then the supper—oh, doleful repast! You could hear the very crumbs fall on the cloth, as Monseigneur himself declared. Of all the company but one man wore an unvarying smile of amusement, and he a stranger. Ernest Hobby had never enjoyed himself so well. That the Count should return unexpectedly! The little man grinned to the ears when that word “unexpectedly” was mentioned. Did he know more than he would have confessed to any living soul? Was it possible that he had sent a secret cable to New York? Out on the infamy—we at any rate know nothing of it, and refuse to believe so preposterous a suggestion.

Be that as it may, Hobby derived much satisfac-

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tion from the circumstance—and when he found himself alone with Canning and they fell to talk about it, he did not hesitate to say as much. He had made up his mind to return to London at an early date and could have happened upon no more reasonable excuse.

“It will be to-morrow, now, I suppose,” he said, as he closed the dressing-room door and puffed away at the remnant of a cigarette—“we can’t be indecent enough to hang on here any longer—now can we, old chap?”

Canning admitted it. He, too, was vastly amused. The Count’s return had been as a douche upon his follies. He could laugh with Hobby, and he did not neglect to do so.

“To-morrow if you like, Hobby. I’ve nothing to say against it. Of course the man was a fool to come home like that. If he will put his nose into the hive without so much as a ‘by your leave,’ he must expect to be stung. If ever I marry, I shall certainly send telegrams. To do less is to argue that a woman has no liberty. She may have plans as private as our own, and there may be no harm in them whatever. Why should she not entertain in our absence the friends we do not like? I see no reason.”

“No more do I, if she takes good care that they are not friends we may have reason to dislike. I’m

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not going to argue about it, Canning. The Count's come home and a jolly good thing, too. What I want to know is, when do we start for London?"

"For London—why London? Are you forgetting our plans?"

"Every one of them. You're going to forget them, too, when you read those. I'd have given them to you before, but I didn't want to spoil your evening. Now, what do you think of them, old chap?"

He passed two cuttings from the recent newspapers, one a vast and florid account of a tragedy, common to all the great dailies; the other an excerpt from a Devon newspaper. Canning read the latter first, read it with close attention and silent testimony to its import. The tragedy appeared to interest him less. He skimmed the dramatic and flowing narration here unfolded, such a narration as catastrophe demands in these days of newspaper competition—and taking up the puny paragraph he read it for the third time.

"This is very terrible, Hobby."

"It's very pathetic, old chap."

"In a way, yes. I knew something of the saccharin—young Benson put me on the track. But the other story matters. They say the old man is probably drowned at sea."

"Yes, I took it that way."

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"Then Jesse Fearney will be quite alone?"

"She will be so, until we arrive. If we start very early in the morning and catch the mail at Tours, we shall be in Paris to-morrow night and in London on the following morning."

"There is a shorter way than that, Hobby."

Hobby raised his eyebrows. "A shorter way?"

"Yes, I shall charter a fast launch at Cherbourg and run round by sea. Did you think of that?"

"Indeed, no—I was not sure—well, that you would go at all."

"I am just the man to stay away at such a time. Thanks for your warm opinion of my chivalry."

Hobby was much upset.

"Oh, no, you misunderstand me, Canning—but I thought perhaps—well, that you would rather I went."

"We will go together, Hobby—as fast as train and ship can carry us. God grant that we shall not be too late."

He knew not why he added that earnest prayer. Perhaps a voice of fatality whispered the truth—that delay had undone him and that this golden opportunity of service and of love had melted away in the mocking sunshine which had lured him to the château. Nemesis, indeed, if that were so. Canning remembered that he was no stranger to Nemesis, and the lesson had been well learned.

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He did not sleep that night. A motor car carried him from the château at seven o'clock upon the following morning, and he went without any farewell to Madame or expressions either of apology or regret. The tragi-comedy was played to its end—time, indeed, to put the puppets in the box.

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CHAPTER XXX

THE SHIP OF FATE

THE sergeant of police remained as a matter of form upon Bell Island, but, when a week had passed, no one believed that the old man was alive or that the law would ever put its hands upon him. Why should they? Had not the police sent their telegrams to all the ports where such a fugitive might seek refuge? Had not the hither and the further seas been scoured by willing seamen, very susceptible to the emotions of pity and having, as they would tell you sadly, "childer of their own"?

These knew very well what had happened to Japhon of the "Pharos." "He were ower-venture-some," they would tell you; "trouble had driven him clean daft."

How, otherwise, could such a wise sailor have put forth upon such a foolish voyage? "There warn't no half-decked lugger between Avonmouth and the Lizard which could have rode out such a night." Japhon was dead for a certainty—though strange, to be sure, that none of them had discovered any traces of his boat, not so much as a single spar in all that wide survey.

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Now, this would be the talk down by the mole when the October nights fell soft and stilly and the inner channel was aglow with the lanterns of the fleet. It was the season of the herring, too, when countless "strangers" sailed down from the North, and even Bell Island could display activities which savored of the strenuous life.

Old in their love of gossip, the islanders delighted in their long recitals—how that Japhon Fearney had been King's man and parson, farmer and merchant these many years; how shrewd he must have been to run that sugary stuff, saccharin, when they themselves were risking their savings for plugs of tobacco and kegs of brandy; what a thing it would have been if he had gone to 'sizes—the whole story in brief, set out with wonderful ornament and not to be related without many glasses. So highly colored were the pictures that many a stranger went up the cliff part at their instigation, gazing at the shuttered windows of the farm and asking, "Is that the lass?" if Jesse appeared. None thought of the Castle in those days—the rumor of the crime was bruited too loudly abroad that the feebler voice of mere curiosity should obtain a hearing.

To Jesse, mercifully, these stories never came. She had shut herself up in the farmhouse—at least, the people would tell you so—and whether she shared their gloomy beliefs or dared more coura-

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geously to hope, they could but surmise. Once or twice, it is true, Frank Benson had waylaid her going up to the headland at a late hour and had guessed the errand that took her there.

"You are looking for your bully in blue buttons," he said chivalrously; "it was the other chap a month ago." To which she disdained an answer—and fearful of the consequences if he molested her, he let her go in peace.

Yes, she was looking for Philip Blake and looking ardently. A woman's instinct for friendship is sure, and Jesse knew perfectly well that this young sailor would befriend her. Dazed by her father's continued absence, but believing against her reason that his skill had saved him from the sea, she refused to harp upon the possibilities of another story, and turned with beating heart to this hope for the man she loved and the day of its consummation.

Had not Philip promised her that he would return to Bell Island almost immediately? How long the hours seemed! What intolerable vigils she kept upon the cliff-head, spying out the fretting sea and complaining upon the void horizon! Why did not Philip write to her? she could ask. Had his promise been a myth, then? Oh, never would she believe that!

Her faith endured during the sunny days of October. No Crusoe upon a desolate isle could have

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waited and watched for the coming of a ship with a larger hope or a surer confidence. Philip Blake would return, and in his return she would find salvation. Thus argued her woman's logic; thus courage carried her to the headland each day at dawn, and found her there again when the harbor lights first flashed out over the hither sea and the sun was sinking into the mighty ocean void. Philip would come and tell her, not only of her father's safety, but of the welfare of the man she loved. So much she believed ardently. Alas, that the fact rewarded her so ill!

Now, it would have been upon the eighth day, shortly after five o'clock of the morning, that the *Marathon* returned to Bell Island. A night of premature winter gave place to a dawn of mists, culminating anon in a veritable sea fog, which swept about the island in monster clouds of drenching mist and hid the very shape of the headlands from those afloat. Jesse, a light sleeper always, was one of the first to hear the blast of the siren which warned the seamen of this visitation—and but half comprehending its meaning and continually anxious concerning all that happened at sea, she rose at once and went down toward the Pharos. Such a journey was hazardous enough even to one who knew the island as she knew it—but hope and courage carried her bravely, and although the mists

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drenched her and the path was often hidden from her sight, she made the village street at last, and hopped upon old Tom Weede at the door of the very first house whose lights she could distinguish.

This worthy was full of the news, be sure of it. Luck alone had saved him from being at sea with the others of the fleet—but he knew the meaning of the siren's blasts and did not hesitate to say so.

"There be a ship on the Spanish Rock—that's what there be," he cried, forgetting that she was a woman and hailing her with all a seaman's familiarity, "three blasts and two—why, the childer knows the meanin' o' that. Now, what in hell are we to do, with not enough hands to man a barrel, and half the boys beyond the Lizard? Ay, that be a masterpiece, that be. I'm d—d if ever I heard anything like it since the *Wolfhound* were wrecked on the Galland Rock. A ship ashore and me the only man that's worth a threepenny—ay, there's summat to talk about."

He stumped up and down before his cottage door, smoking his pipe furiously and crying "Hark!" whenever the siren's blast came shrieking over the hills. Jesse, for her part, could but stare at him with eyes wide open, while such a sense of helplessness and despair overtook her as she had never known in all her life. A ship ashore on the Span-

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ish Rock. What ship could that be if not the *Marathon*? Oh, this were fate indeed!

"A ship ashore on the Spanish Rock," she cried amazed; "then what ship is it—not the *Marathon*, Mr. Weede; you wouldn't tell me it is the *Marathon*?" He took his pipe from his mouth with one hand and laid the other gently upon her arm.

"Listen here," he said; "she were to return and pick up her moorin's sometime atween midnight and daybreak. Well, here she be sure enough. And what did I say to 'em not ten days gone? 'You may come your blarsted navigashun horficers over me,' says I, 'but the man as can pick up a moorin' by Bell Island in a d—d sea fog is fit ter be wrote of in the books and have the statute set up.' Well, here he be, miss, to be sure—and that's the guns he's a-firin' of now. As if I couldn't hear him loud enough without them there. Does he think I can pull the boat single-handed? Blarst me, if that wouldn't be a miracle same as the prophets."

He bade her listen again, and the thunder of the great guns boomed loud and weirdly in the seething fog. Now, also, some of the women came running from the cottages and began to ask what the matter might be. Lads grouped themselves about Tom Weede and heard him with awe. One of the girls with a woman's instinct offered Jesse a cup of tea and begged her to come into the cottage a little while.

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"Well, miss," she said, "wishing won't help them poor souls, to be sure. Oh, this is a dreadful day and none of us will forget it I must say—but we poor women have enough of our own to put up with without other people's. Do you come in and rest yourself a little while. 'Tis dreadful cold and fit to perish a body. If there's anything to be done my Will will do it when he comes ashore—but I don't look for him until the fog's lifted, and that's sure and certain. Come in, miss, and we'll make a cup of tea."

Jesse went with her as one in a dream. The girl was but eighteen and had been married some two years. Her Will Benning was one of the best seamen on the island—ah, he would have helped the poor folk if he had been ashore—but that Tom Weede, why, a babe in arms would be of more use. "You see, miss," she said, "the wind's dropped and they won't be in danger yet a while. We'll have some of the boats in just now and there'll be plenty willing to go. Do you rest till that happens—I'm sure you're sorry enough, as we all must be at such a time. That's what we poor women were made for, I do believe—to be sorry for others and never to think about ourselves at all. We'd help gladly enough if we could, but wishing isn't doing, as all the world knows."

Jesse sipped her tea, grateful for its warmth.

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She had answered the girl but in monosyllables hitherto, and now she sat as one spellbound, to listen to the muted thunder of the distant guns and to imagine that scene which the fog veiled so mercifully. A ship on the Spanish Rock—the ship of fate she had waited for so ardently in dire peril at the very foot of the giant headland. What child would not understand the meaning of those words? And she, Jesse, had been thinking but of herself during these moments most precious; her own hopes had dictated all her questions, all her venturings, while brave men were fighting for their lives and longing eyes were searching that shore from which help should come. Oh, this were self-condemnation indeed—and she the daughter of a man who would have risked his life a hundred times to drag one fellow creature from the sea.

“Mrs. Bennings,” she said at last, setting the cup upon the clean white table and rising purposely, “if there are not men at home to go out with the life-boat, we, the women, must go.”

“Oh, miss, what a thing to say!”

“It is what we would all say if we thought of it. Have they not wives and children at home waiting for them? Would you not wish them to go if your husband were on board the *Marathon*? Oh, answer me yes—say that you will help me. Have we not been the wives and sisters and the children of such

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as these all our lives? What forbids us to go? Say that you are ready—say that you will help them as you would wish others to help your husband when his day comes.”

The girl stared in blank amazement. What, that women should put forth in the great lifeboat which they had always regarded fearfully and with a woman’s dread! She was terrified by the suggestion. Her words stuck in her throat—she licked her lips as one who is trying to speak, but whose tongue refuses its office.

“Do you really mean, miss——” she stammered at last.

“I mean what I say,” cried Jesse, her eyes bright with the daring of it, her brain aflame; “we must go to their help—now, immediately. The women must go. Shall we be called cowards to all time? You say the sea is calm, there is no wind. Oh, what forbids us, what forbids us to do God’s work when there are no men to do it?”

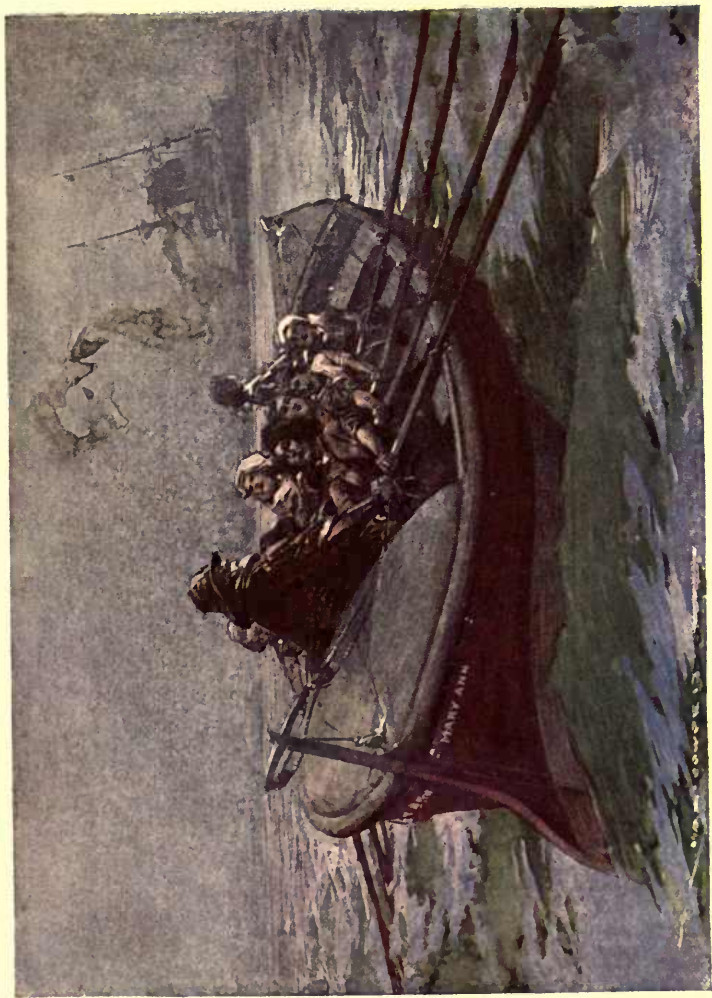
This and much more was her argument. She spoke proudly, and other women coming to the cottage when they knew she was there, she turned to them with arguments no less eloquent. The women of Bell Island must go. They must do this thing. There were twenty willing before the clock struck again—thirty in the great lifeboat when old Tom Weede and such of the lads as had the strength—

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to say nothing of the police sergeant—let it go down the slip and it cut its rippling wake upon the glasslike surface of the still sea.

Oh, they were a brave company, a wonderful company, and the world has honored them! Picture that scene in the gray of the morning, the rolling, shifting wraith of the fog alternately hiding and disclosing their set but womanly faces—wives, sisters, daughters of those who went down to the sea in ships; women who an hour gone were lighting the fires and boiling the kettles against their husbands' home-coming. And now they sat, willing slaves of this great crimson galley, pulling it awkwardly but with no mean strength across the harbor bar, trying to obey the pompous voice of old Tom Weede at the tiller as he cried, "Steady, my girls!" or "Bravely done!" or "Now she takes it!" Anon they passed the little lighthouse at the head of the mole and were shrouded instantly in the enveloping mists. The land, the houses, the very stones of the harbor were hidden from their sight. Voices came to them as sounds muffled afar. They were afraid to speak—the very splash of the oars echoed weirdly on the still air.

A strange world this—a world of uncanny shapes, of water glistening beneath the fog, of that sense of peril which the sea mist rarely fails to inspire. Some of these brave women were crying now. Ah,



VOICES CAME TO THEM AS SOUNDS MUFFLED AFAR. THEY WERE AFRAID TO
SPEAK—THE VERY SPLASH OF THE OARS ECHOED WEIRDLY ON THE STILL AIR

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if they should never see their homes again. To these Jesse spoke bravely as she plied the stoutest oar—or, bidding them go easy, listened to Tom Weede and waited for him while he took his bearings. They were about to restore husbands and fathers to other women's houses. Should they count the cost? The fog would be gone anon and their own husbands there to help them. So they pressed on, the great guns calling them. Ah, those guns whose booming echoed in many an ear that never again would be conscious of the great world or its voices—the guns which seemed to say “doom,” “doom.” An hour ago this proud ship had been steaming up the Bristol Channel upon the beginnings of that voyage which should lead to home and holiday. The year's work was done. Many of its seamen were to be paid off presently. And it steamed majestically as to a joyous home-coming; every man full of his own hopes—some speaking openly of the girls who waited for them; some with a tender word for little children.

Look up high to the bridge and you may see a young officer strutting there, cocksure of his own superiority and of the inferiority of all others—the admiral of the fleet not excepted. The commander himself is in his cabin snatching a brief rest richly deserved. There is content, certainty, conviction—for what cares a King's ship for a little fog and by

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what miraculous mishap is she to be destroyed? So these good fellows would have argued, had argument been their amusement—and so among them stalked Master Humility, looking for a victory. They were nineteen miles from Bell Island, said the reckoning—ah, the mischief of it, since the Spanish Reef is not a mile distant and they are heading straight for it.

And now behold the drama of awakening. There is a harsh sound heard as of rasping of iron with a mighty file—the whole ship trembles as though with fear; plunges forward dizzily; shakes herself as a hound returning to a shore and settles down heavily upon the bosom of the rock. The prevailing sound is one of scalding steam and hissing valves—you can hear the water pouring heavily through the breach, the rasping of the steel upon the jagged rocks; the crashing of freed booms and of heavy iron torn from the lashings. But for a brief instant no human voice. The commander and the navigating officer stagger together from their cabins; the boy upon the bridge is cocksure no longer, but pale, motionless, awaits his orders.

Good God! what happening is this? They are nineteen miles from Bell Island—they must be, and the sea has smitten them miraculously. So their thoughts run—but the navigating officer knows better. As in a flash it comes to him that there has

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been an error. Some one has blundered—has been befooled by the fog—the ship has struck. Ruin stares him in the face, but he looks upon it boldly. Duty is here to be done—a fine duty despite the knowledge that the end of many careers has come.

And so the ringing command is heard at last above the muttering of ship and ocean. Bulkhead doors are closed; collision mats prepared. A signal gun summons help from the shore; seamen and soldiers are mustered on deck; the boats are made ready. None work more methodically or with finer will than the engineers; but what is their skill against this enemy of the passionless rock, ripping, tearing, rending? There are minutes of sagging life before a great ship that has cost the nation nearly a million of money—minutes yet when she may lift a proud head and say "I am." Then comes tragic submission. She lists heavily to port, the steel plates buckle and give way; the decks are rent, monster guns crash from their turrets and go headlong to the rocks below; steam foams above the reef as the spume of a volcano; live coals are vomited from the half-submerged funnel and fall hissing into the whirlpool of the waters. But all this with a stately deliberation which no master of tragic pageantry could surpass—deliberate, piecemeal, inevitable, terrifying.

What meanwhile of the men drawn up there upon

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the streaming decks? What of their thoughts as the great ship lists and the water, rising as a thin green line above the port bulwarks, descends at last in a monstrous wave, engulfing and irresistible? Gone is all order now. The wild cry, the despairing shriek echo across the waste. Some die in grim silence, fighting stubbornly with death; others surrender to their doom as children to sleep—a few, and these the swimmers, strike out to the right, to the left, losing all sense of locality in the fog and believing that help must be at hand. These can hear the siren's blast long after the booming of the guns is stilled. They make for it blindly, amid the chaos of wreckage and of human bodies. There is a haven at hand, but no ship has put out to their rescue. Oh, the cruelty of it, the torture of this mad hope, the frenzied prayer to God, the wild uplifting of eyes to that heaven which is hidden from their sight! And what courage goes with them to the end! Is there a spar here, a very raft of fortune, Jack will call his brother to it. Brave exhortations help the laggards. There are jesters still to be heard, ay, best of friends and finest of men, who declare the girls will never know them when they get ashore and express the hope that breakfast will be ready. Such as these the still sea mocks. "Hush!" it seems to say, "here is the ocean of death; do not desecrate these holy waters."

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CHAPTER XXXI

JESSE GOES TO LONDON

THE sea fog is at all times a fine impresario, contriving its effects of drama with magic swiftness; but never more bewitchingly than when the sun is its ally, and a morning of golden autumn lies hid behind the silver curtain.

Those who have told of the wreck of the *Marathon* make much of the natural contrasts which that scene of tragedy presented. They tell with reason of a grim irony which sent a great ship to her doom upon a fog-bound coast, when, had she delayed but an hour, she would have picked up her moorings amid such a scene of radiant sunshine as can be surpassed for picturesqueness nowhere in the world. For thus, in truth, it befell at Bell Island upon that October morning. The dawn brought the drenching, penetrating fog—but at eight o'clock the heaven was sunny and the sky of unclouded blue; the waters were dancing with life; the houses shone gloriously white upon the cliffs; the pastures added a lustre of green and gold to the spreading landscape.

Now, fogs disperse in many ways. Some are

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blown asunder by winds into little companies of the mists; others march off in cloudy battalions—others again, the fogs of autumn, are drawn up by the heat as it were to the very bowels of the heavens, leaving but wisps upon the water and these soon to be absorbed as the sun gains power and the day grows older. Such was the fog in which the *Marathon* was wrecked.

Let us stand upon the southern headland, which is Bell Island's glory, and watch this splendid drama as the seascape unfolds it for us. We are enshrouded by a blinding mist; can scarcely see our hands before our faces; are utterly ignorant of all that is happening around, above, below us. But now, behold; this silent impresario is busy! There is a faint breath of wind. The mists are cleaved—we begin to see a haze of light; the path takes shape; the cliffs are outlined to our view; we distinguish the deserted Castle; the great lighthouse below it—and then, as in a twinkling, the whole sea is declared—the glassy water; the fleet of fishing boats returning—and down yonder the familiar harbor; the winding village street. And we say that the day will be a day of autumn in all her beauty; we know that the night has passed indeed.

This would be upon a common occasion; but the dawn of drama would change our picture beyond all knowledge. Then, as heretofore, the sea is de-

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clared suddenly, the shores revealed; the lighthouse made known to us. But hardly is the fog lifted before the true story of the night is ours. What movement, what commotion upon the hither waters! And how unfamiliar that scene about the Spanish Rock, the great gray ship standing up above the ebbing tide; the wreckage all about it; the fishing boats hurrying to the place; the sea itself alive with the attendant satellites. Now, indeed, is the story known even upon the mainland. Tugs, as vultures of the deep, appear upon a far horizon. Fishing boats are propelled by giant sweeps upon a work of mercy. From shore to shore the message is flashed until the story of disaster is known at Falmouth, at Plymouth, even in Whitehall. Not a man, a woman or a child upon Bell Island who is not there at the cliffhead, watching the drama in silent stupefaction. This is a story for the children's children; who will miss a line of it?

Let it be said at once that of all the details of that fateful event none has remained in the memory of the people so surely as the picture of the lifeboat, and of the brave women who rowed it to the wreck at Jesse Fearney's bidding. Sitting out blindly in the fog, uncertain at the beginning even of the nature of the disaster, the *Mary Ann* went among the drowning seamen as a ship of salvation

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sent almost miraculously upon this crowning work of mercy. Many a despairing wretch about to surrender to cold and the terror of the sea clutched the strong hand thrust out to him from this all unexpected apparition of the waters; many a woman blessed Jesse Fearney's name that night and muttered it in her prayers. And if the work were but pitiful when the reckoning were made, let this at least be said that no crew of men would have done better, and that but for one woman's courage and good faith, no less than forty brave seamen would have made their last voyage upon any ship.

It had been seven o'clock of the morning when the lifeboat put out upon its first voyage; it was after midday when it returned from its last. Bell Island then witnessed such a scene of life and excitement as never had been known in all its story. Every house boasted its drenched guests—there were seamen going to and fro in small boats constantly—tugs had come over from the mainland and were cruising in the deep waters beyond the mole; the fishing fleet had returned and the little harbor became a forest of masts. Not prone to acclaim heroism, none the less the good fellows about the harbor could bestir themselves at the lifeboat's return, and give it a rousing cheer you might almost have heard across the Channel. Ay, they were glad that their women should prove stout

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hearts—but they would not make overmuch of them, and the good souls tramped back to their homes as unconcerned and unaware of their own fame as any housewife in the kingdom. Let the newspapers cackle of this affair to-morrow. What mattered it to them, and what did newspapers know of the sea and its sacrifices?

Jesse Fearney, be it said, was one of the first ashore, and Jo, the nigger, her father's boatman, one of the first who greeted her there. Guessing nothing of the curiosity which inspired, in some measure, this daring venture, he told her in a word that of which the island had been talking this hour or more.

Philip Blake was dead. His body had been carried to the chapel; it was one of the first to be brought on shore. Every one was sorry for "Massa Blake," and he was much liked. Jesse heard him with inclined head and averted eyes. She knew that it could not be otherwise; she had been sure of this when her keen glance searched the fretting waters about the wreck and no trace of Philip had been discovered. He was dead! He would never befriend her more. This must be the end of all that new and sudden hope. He was dead—this friend who had wished so well to her.

She returned to the farm, avoiding converse with all, interesting herself no more in that work of mercy which so many willing hands were ready to

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do. To Hannah, the maid, she said nothing of the events of the morning, save to tell her that the *Marathon* was wrecked upon the Spanish Rock and that she feared many had perished. Possessing a nature truly womanly and wholly unsympathetic, she wondered at this euthanasia of pity which had overtaken her—at the quiet survey she could make both of her own possession and of others. All the horror and the dread of the things happening down there upon the shore but drove her more surely to the seclusion of the farm and the refuge of her thoughts. She must find her father, she said; she must find John Canning. A great yearning to go to the man she loved, to say “Help me,” sustained her and animated all her actions. Ah, if she could begin such a journey to-day, set out that very moment. Pride was done with now. The woman in her said, “You have the right to go to him; he will hear you.” And this instinct of her womanhood she was all willing to obey, could they but point the road to her.

Women are clever in sorrow and often resourceful. Jesse could wonder now why she had accepted all the events of the past few days so unquestioningly; why her father’s absence had not awakened her to action; why she had relied upon poor Philip Blake to do for her that which her own wit must contrive. Was she not the mistress of the island

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in so far as her father had been the master of it? Suddenly conscious of the meaning of the term, she locked herself in old Japhon's poor sanctum and began methodically to examine his papers. No sense of sanctity restrained her; no hesitation as to the nature and scope of her duty; but quietly, persistently she went through the dusty pile of letters; examined the books and the ill-written letters, turned out the drawers; laid bare the cupboards. It was five o'clock of the afternoon when she had finished the task, and Hannah was calling her to tea. Never had the hours of a mean employment passed so swiftly.

They will tell you on Bell Island how that Jesse left them that night to go to London; with what astonishment the news was heard even by those to whom the day had been memorable beyond all experience. She had gone at eight o'clock, the men said, and would catch the night mail. Jo, the nigger, and Isaacson, the Swede, sailed the boat which had carried her father so often upon his secret missions. Her purpose, however, was known to none. Some thought she had gone to tell Mr. Blake of his son's death—others hinted that she knew where Japhon was hiding and would seek him out in this hour of the disaster. But all quickly forgot the circumstance—for why should they remember it upon such a night?

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Was not the island a wild scene enough that they should think of others? Ay, the strange changes, the comings and goings of poor bereaved people—the black ships anchored off the reef; the flares burning brightly to make the night as day. Here was something of which England would speak in whispers to-morrow—this tale written upon the waters of the glassy sea; this holocaust so overwhelming and unaccountable. Ay, a tale to be winged through the length and breadth of the land—not any pitiful account of women at the oars or any nonsense of that sort.

Bell Island, be sure, would have laughed at those who told of a brave thing done by women. Even the reporters who came to get some account of it were mocked to their faces. Was not there news enough that such an affair should be remembered?

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CHAPTER XXXII

ABRAHAM WESSON RETURNS FROM HIS HOLIDAY

OLD Abraham Wesson entered his office in Old Broad Street at ten o'clock precisely; and having hung his very respectable frock coat upon the accustomed nail and donned the alpaca jacket which his own laws demanded of him, he glanced at the pile of letters upon his desk and rang for his clerk, Muller.

Now, Abraham had been away from London for ten days, almost an unknown happening in a life which lacked event. Possibly he was, upon his return, justly anxious to know how the City had continued to exist without him and if the Lord Chancellor still occupied the woolsack. In any case, he awaited his confidential fellow with no little impatience, and when that worthy, Muller, appeared he plunged instantly into a maze of talk which would have been worse than Greek to the layman. For it was all of acts and deeds and covenants and conveyances; of actions impending and actions to be put down in the list; of opinions upon this case and counter-opinions upon that; in brief, of that exact and yet befogging science by which, as the philoso-

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pher has told us, the king decides 'twixt those who would do much better to agree to differ.

Abraham Wesson was not of this opinion. He loved the law, loved its mustiness, its vellum, its very sealing wax. Human beings did not exist for him; they were plaintiffs or defendants, as the case might be. When he asked Muller if any one had called during his absence he hardly expected to hear a Christian name in answer. It would be "*Meggs versus Wild*," or "*Bogg versus Knipp*," or any one of the numerous cases which rarely failed to fill his head with shrewd thoughts and his purse with guineas. An exception, perhaps, we should admit, and that was his reference to an interesting client in whom he had never lost faith. Had John Canning called? He was all ears when he put this question—the answer interested him strangely.

"We have heard nothing, sir, since we had the order not to proceed at the island."

"And there's no news of him in any of the papers?"

"Except as to what happened to the ship at Bell Island, sir."

"To what ship? What are you talking about?"

Muller sighed, but was not surprised. Old Abraham rarely knew anything of the day's news. He could tell you which party was in office and how England lost yearly by buying foreign wheat, but

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in other matters he was as guileless as a child. Let a man speak of a new hotel in Piccadilly, of sport at Ranelagh or at Lords, of an earthquake in the Pacific, or an eruption of Vesuvius, and Abraham would stare at him resentfully. Why talk of these things when "*Mole versus Burrow*" was before the courts? Were men mad to fuddle their brains with such trivialities?

So here was Muller telling the old fellow the whole story of it, how that the ship had struck upon the Spanish reef; how many of the seamen had been rescued by a lifeboat which the women rowed; how there had been brave but futile efforts to raise the wreck, the whole story in short as we know it, but as Abraham Wesson heard it for the first time upon that November morning.

"Astonishing!" he exclaimed, "and these things cost the nation more than half a million, to say nothing of what we pay to the foreigners. I wonder that Canning was away from home at such a time; he's missed a great opportunity. Do you say that nothing has been heard from the place at all?"

"I won't say that, sir—a young lady has called."

"A young lady—why, who would she be?"

Muller shook his head.

"She would leave no name, sir. She wished to see you alone. It's about Canning's affairs, though, for she told me so."

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Abraham was doubtful. The Law does not love young ladies who frequent lawyers' offices—unless they come as plaintiffs. This might be anything from blackmail downward. He hoped that Muller had not been foolish.

"You didn't give Mr. Canning's address or any nonsense of that sort?"

"Oh no, sir, I am not quite so foolish as that."

"That's right, that's right—never give an address to a woman—it's dangerous, it's most dangerous."

Muller answered that he supposed it was, and, being a married man, he could speak with some conviction. His further observations, however, were arrested by the appearance of a small boy in the office, a red-haired, impudent youth who knocked upon the door with the fist of Vulcan and spoke with the accents of Stratford-atte-Bow.

"The lidy agen," was all he said—even Abraham understood that.

"Would it be the girl herself?" he asked Muller. The clerk replied that he thought it must be so, for this was the hour at which she had presented herself hitherto.

"Then I'll see her at once—don't let me be interrupted."

And so he met Jesse of the Pharos for the first time—grown so much older these latter days, but losing nothing of her natural beauty, and carrying

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herself with such dignity that even the lawyer could admit it. "Ha," said the old rogue, "so this is what he wanted with that bit of a rock in the Bristol Channel—well, I might have known it, I might have known it."

Outwardly, to be sure, he was all bustling politeness and bending humility. Thirty years ago he had known weaknesses of this kind himself—and he could still dust a chair and set a table for a lady with any lawyer in the neighborhood. Jesse thought him an odd old man. She had always been taught by her father to dread the Law—but who could be afraid of *this*?

"I am Jesse Fearney, the daughter of Japhon Fearney, of the Home Farm upon Bell Island," she said quietly; "my purpose in coming to London is to meet Mr. John Canning and to bring him some news of great importance." The old lawyer nodded his head. Strangely enough he was listening, but ill. Some memory of what he had been reading in the newspaper concerning the wreck of the *Marathon*, some vague idea that the nation had been honoring a woman's name and that this woman sat before him, occurred to him despite other interests.

"Pardon me," he said, lifting up the sheet as he spoke, "but before we speak of other matters, may I ask you if you are the Miss Fearney mentioned here?"

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She looked at him in wonder. Of small concern to her had any newspaper been since she arrived, friendless, in this great city, seeking but one of all its millions, hoping but to one end during all the dark days. Oh, be sure Jesse knew nothing of the newspapers.

"I do not know what you mean," she stammered; "but I am the only Jesse Fearney on Bell Island."

"Then I am proud to make your acquaintance, young lady; I consider it an honor that you should come to this office."

She knew not what he meant. How different from the lawyers of whom her poor father had spoken! This old man surely would listen patiently to her.

"I came to you," she said, "to tell you that the father of the late Lieutenant Blake, whose son was drowned in the accident, knows something which may be of great service to Mr. Canning. I went to the Castle, but there is no one there who could help me. My father is also away, and so I thought it best to come to you."

"Then you had heard of me, Miss Fearney?"

"Indeed, no. I learned your name by reading my father's correspondence—in his absence."

He regarded her with open admiration.

"And so you put two and two together and came to London. That was a very brave thing to do."

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"It was a very obvious thing to do, Mr. Wesson."

He liked that, liked this pretty child in every mood. True she had discovered a mare's nest, he thought, and he doubted if any mere desire to help John Canning with information had carried her to London. "She is in love with him, and here will be a story," he said, and so he temporized still.

"Well," he exclaimed presently, "I don't know where Mr. Canning is at present, though I don't suppose it will be long before I see him again. You, I suppose, are returning immediately?"

"Indeed, no; I am going to Belgium."

"To Belgium?"

"Yes, to find my father, who, I have reason to suppose, is living there."

Wesson opened his eyes at this. Fearney—Fearney, where had that name occurred to him in connection with things appertaining to the Law? Ah, he remembered it. Was not there a Fearney wanted by the police in connection with the frauds at Barnstaple? Impossible to believe that this was the man whose daughter sat before him.

"Are you leaving London immediately, Miss Fearney?"

"I propose to go to-morrow—if you will give me your promise that my message shall be sent to Mr. Canning to-day."

"It shall be sent upon the first possible oppor-

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tunity. Meanwhile, should anything occur, is there no address which will find you?"

She hesitated an instant—a flush of color suffusing her cheeks.

"No," she said at last, "I do not wish to leave my address. I prefer to trust to your interest in Mr. Canning and his affairs."

And this was all. Neither argument nor cajolery could move that simple, stately girl, who treated this old man with such dignity and defied him by her candor. "She did not wish to leave her address." Another would have made excuses, the old fellow said, as he bowed her down the stairs and opened the private door for her with his own hands. And she, if the papers were to be believed, was little short of a national heroine—whom the country would honor if it could. A strange affair indeed—a fine mystery to greet him upon his return.

Very slowly and full of thought he climbed the office stairs again and rang his bell. When Muller appeared he gave that imperturbable fellow some earnest, almost vehement, instructions in a tone and with a manner quite foreign to him.

"We must find Canning," he cried in a voice grown hoarse with its own energies; "find him at any cost. Send telegrams everywhere—to his hotels, to Bell Island, to Mr. Hobby's office. I have urgent news—it will not wait."

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"I beg your pardon, sir—but I think that's Mr. Canning now—I hear his voice downstairs."

Abraham Wesson listened with ear intent. There was no doubt about it. John Canning, newly returned from France, had come straight to Old Broad Street to hear the lawyer's news and to relate his own.

"Good God!" exclaimed the old lawyer, "and I have let the woman go. Run after her, Muller—fetch her back—she can't be twenty steps away." He danced with excitement, frothed with the intentions of pursuit; but the clerk, snatching up a hat at hazard, ran straight into John Canning's arms.

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CHAPTER XXXIII

THE PRISONER IS TO BE CALLED FORTUNATE

A QUESTION from the impetuous traveler to the agitated clerk extorted the information that Jesse Fearney had just called at the office, and had left it but two minutes at the most.

"I am running after her, sir," the amiable Muller declared.

"Then I'll come with you," said John Canning, and he turned and left the office regardless of old Abraham Wesson, who was calling him at the stairs head.

Which way had she gone? Which of all those perplexing streets would she have followed? How well Canning knew them all! Had not they been the scenes of his triumph in the old days? Was not it here that Fortune smiled upon and mocked him in turn? And now he followed them as a man possessed—followed neither riches nor fame, but just a face of his dreams, blindly, as one who believed that this was his goal, this the master key of the Fate which had so long derided him.

She would have gone toward the Exchange, he

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said. Naturally her lodging would be somewhere in the West End of London—and she would make for the Mansion House. It was a torture to think that she might escape him after all, that the quest was futile at the best, and that a man might as well look to pick a diamond from the stones as to discover her in that press. None the less he hurried on, a figure to be remarked and laughed at—bare-headed, running, scanning every face, fretting at all delay—hoping, believing always. When he came to the corner of Threadneedle Street, to the door of the house which had expelled him with ignominy, he must stand a while and curse his luck. What a vast concourse of people now forbade him to pass! He heard a great sound as of many voices cheering, he was carried on by the mob despite his endeavor to free himself. What a fretting throng here was gathered together, laughing, cheering, leaping, man upon the shoulders of man! Old knowledge told him that some crisis had happened, some news come to hand to move the markets to this frenzy. But he must pass, whatever it was—he implored them to let him through.

They told him, many voices speaking together.

“Don’t you know,” they said, “that’s Jesse Fearney who took the lifeboat. Cheer, man, cheer—have you no heart?”

He stood quite still now and listened to the cries

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as to some music from a distant shore. Of course they would act in this way. Some one had pointed her out, he said—perhaps one of the boys in the office. She had been followed from Old Broad Street, the news flashing from mouth to mouth—"Yonder goes Jesse Fearney, who took the lifeboat out." And now these good fellows of the Stock Exchange had made her their prisoner and were showering gifts upon her.

Ah, what madness, and yet what well-meant madness! How big men dance and yell like children! Merchants, brokers, jobbers—you may put them all in the same boat. They are remembering their birthright and honoring Jesse of the Pharos. One snatches a great diamond pin from his scarf and thrusts it into the fur of her boa; others run into a neighboring jeweler's shop and bring out diamonds in their hands; there is not a flower stall within two hundred yards that is not gutted by feverish hands. Oh, rich is their opportunity to prove themselves children of the great heritage of the sea! They will bear this image of brave womanhood aloft, worshipping in their rough psalmody which is none the worse for its city rhythm. "Jesse, Jesse of the Pharos!" they cried. And the shout is taken up and echoes in far streets, and thousands press in to the shrine, and thousands upon the outskirts bewail their isolation.

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She was very pale through it all; understanding their meaning but vaguely, and greatly frightened by their devotion. Presently she fell to weeping, and this disconcerted them. Ashamed and afraid, she begged them to let her go, and in the pause attending, John Canning fought his way to her side. Ah, that was a rendezvous indeed, and the City will tell you of it as a sacred thing—the hatless, disheveled, breathless man, his coat half gone from his back, his face crimson, his arms outstretched, and before him the amazed Jesse—knowing not what to say or to do, but a very picture of girlish beauty in her distress.

He caught her to his heart and, some one recognizing him, the name of John Canning was passed from lip to lip. Presently a fellow bolder than the others raised a cheer, and this was quickly taken up. Well did the House know now that this man had been unjustly accused and unjustly convicted. They would begrudge nothing of such a moment as this, deny him no admission, withhold from him no just tribute. And they cheered him roundly, cheered when he caught Jesse in his arms, cheered when he lifted her to a cab, raced after them still cheering until the vast traffic enveloped them and the cab was lost in its vortex.

Now, Canning had given the driver of the cab a direction at hazard, and for a little while the man

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drove wildly, enjoying the humors of pursuit and understanding the situation perfectly. When, however, they had passed the Mansion House and come almost to St. Paul's, he ventured to ask for a direction and was astonished to hear that he was to drive to the Carlton Hotel.

"We must stop there until I find out where your father is," Canning said to Jesse, when he had spoken to the man. "All the news seems to say that he is with Count Gabrielle in Bruges—you know, of course, that the Count's launch picked him up, after all. There is not another man in the Bristol Channel who would have come through that night safely, Jesse."

She said that she thought it must be so, and that some instinct had told her from the first that all was well with her father. Very quiet, sobbing a little still, she sat by his side and heard him as some comforter sent by a miracle to her side. Whither or why, she did not ask. What woman would have done otherwise at such an hour?

"We shall find your father and bring him back with us. I hear from Scotland Yard that the Holly Angus affair is all rubbish, and the rest is a matter of money, Jesse. I am glad that it is so. I am glad to be able to tell you this with conviction."

She answered him with averted face that her father was a poor man and would never be able to

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pay such a fine as the Government would demand. But here for the first time he laughed at her.

"Do you not know that I am rich, little girl?"

"My father would never let any one else help him."

"Oh, Jesse, Jesse—what will he not do for the daughter he loves? Are we not going to him together?"

He put his arm about her and drew her head down upon his shoulder.

"Six months ago," he said, "you promised me that you would not forget—have you forgotten to-day, Jesse?"

She did not answer him. Some who passed them by laughed as they went—but Canning, forgetting all the world, stooped and kissed her lips.

Ah, this London—it had given him fortune after all, then.

For here was the Master Key, which vainly he had sought and, finding, would not surrender to his life's end.

THE END

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